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The (un)written heart in Brecht's Baal and Journeys of the god of happiness : heart matters in the development of a playwright and his ideas on acting

Ralf G. Rauker
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**The (un)written heart in Brecht's *Baal*
and *Journeys of the God of Happiness*:**
Heart matters in the development of a playwright and
his ideas on acting

By

**Ralf Gerd Räuker
Dip. Acting**

**An exegesis submitted as partial requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Education and Arts
Edith Cowan University**

2010

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

Abstract

In the 1918 and 1919 versions of his play *Baal*, Brecht had used autobiographical material about a heart problem that he suffered from and had recorded in his diaries since 1913. When he revised the 1919 version and the play was first published in 1922, it seemed that this very personal connection had disappeared. An observable shift in his work began to take place, which led to his adopting an apparently unambiguous rationalist take on theatre. However, his extremely critical, sometimes polemical position on the intertwined subject of heart and emotions raises questions about the motivations for the move towards the head as locus of control in his work. The question of whether this shift was caused by an inner necessity or by outer influences has led me to a third possibility, that these two strands are interwoven and complementary. I also discovered that Brecht did not rigorously eliminate his heart problem and related fear of death from the *Baal* versions after 1919. He replaced it in an enciphered form into the 1922 version. By analysing this, I have indicated Brecht's developing camouflage technique. His camouflaging and masking of his vulnerable heart in the progression of *Baal* drew my attention to a related play fragment.

Journeys of the God of Happiness was "based on the same fundamental idea" as *Baal*: "*It is impossible to entirely kill the human urge for happiness.*" It was Brecht's attempt to transform *Baal* into something more compatible with his developing Marxist interpretation of how the "human urge for happiness" should be channeled. His 1950 formula seemed simple: "Happiness is: Communism". The fact that the heart was not mentioned once in *Journeys of the God of Happiness* led me to the idea to implant the word 'heart', the image of the organ, its beat, the metaphorical and symbolic radiance that it potentially has, into my adaption and production of the fragment. After workshopping *Baal* with a group of students in 2006, I began to prepare *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*, the creative component of my doctoral studies, which premiered in 2008.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- i. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or
- iii. contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

Date: 1 May 2011

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Introduction

I command my heart. I declare my heart to be in a state of siege.
It is beautiful to live. (GBA¹, vol. 26, p. 108, my translation²)

No. It is senseless to live. Last night I had a heart cramp that left
me with astonishment, this time the devil did first class work.
Today I philosophize again ... (GBA, vol. 26, p.109)

It [the *Baal* manuscript] should be 'more similar' to oneself! One
should make it with intestines, heart and blood in it and lungs
and let it run, with a kick! (Brecht in Schmidt, 1968, p. 98)

An observable shift

Through examining the five different versions of Bertolt Brecht's first play *Baal* and his related play fragment, *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, "that again has to do with the fundamental idea behind *Baal*" (GBA, vol.10.2, p.1257), I will describe a shift in Brecht's work as a playwright and his subsequent development as a theatre theorist. I will explore the anatomical aspects and the psychosomatic contexts of these texts. There is an observable shift in Brecht's relationship with the concept of the heart, which involves a quite overt use of autobiographical material concerning his heart problem, through to a process of camouflaging and distancing the material. In this exegesis I contend that the latter process was a necessary act, to control the anxiety that he was experiencing with his heart problems, as described in the above first two quotations. I also argue that a further reason for Brecht's development of camouflage and distancing techniques was his changing approach to playwriting and theatre aesthetics. It is impossible to precisely quantify these two causes. Instead I aim to demonstrate that they are inextricably interwoven.

¹ Bertolt Brecht, Werke. Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe in 30 Bänden [33 Teilbänden] Eds. Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei and Klaus-Detlef Müller. Frankfurt a. M., Berlin und Weimar 1988-2000.

² Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author.

It is possible to explain Brecht's work either in terms of rationality and politics, or in terms of his specific psychology and autobiography. Generally, the two approaches have been viewed as mutually exclusive. I argue in favour of a model that collapses this dichotomy and reveals these two strands as complementary. I am aware that this model may appear tentative and I do not want to give the impression that my work will offer a full realization of this integrated approach. Before this can happen, there is work to be conducted in decoding the camouflaged autobiographical elements in Brecht's work. My contribution to this highly complex process of reinterpreting Brecht will focus on his heart problem, and how his manner of managing the ailment impacted on his development as a writer and consequently as a theorist in theatre. The creative component of my doctoral studies was realized with tertiary students and the question of how Brecht as a writer and theorist can be taught today, played an integral part in my practical work as well as in this exegesis.

The main observation upon which I will base my investigation and analysis is the fact that in Brecht's 1918 and 1919 versions of *Baal*, the main character struggles with identical symptoms of a heart disease which Brecht himself was experiencing, whereas in the 1922, 1926 and 1955 versions these heart problems are no longer mentioned. Additionally, in *Journeys of the God of Happiness* the word 'heart' does not appear even once.

One could characterize the shift in Brecht's writing, as a move from an incorporation of the highly physical, as exemplified in the first two *Baal* versions with their life-threatened heart, towards an emphasis on the head as the centre of consciousness and locus of control, as seen in the later *Baal* versions, and in the unfinished *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. Although the shift from heart to head as 'commander' is discernible in his writing, it is my argument that Brecht never wanted his approach, which favoured thinking over emotions, to become dry intellectualism. Nevertheless, this approach was a step in the development of his so-called rationalistic take on theatre.

Looking at Brecht's early work on *Baal* gave me an insight into the possible autobiographical origins of his playwriting. I was encouraged to take

this path by Jürgen Hillesheim's book, *"Ich muss immerzu dichten": Zur Aesthetik des jungen Brecht ("I have to constantly write poetry": On the aesthetics of the young Brecht)*. In this work, Hillesheim, who is the director of the Brecht research centre in Augsburg, presents the first comprehensive historical and scientific investigation of the young Brecht's development as a writer during his years in his hometown of Augsburg. I had already decided to work on *Baal* and the following statement convinced me that I was on the right track:

...despite the variety of currently known sources and references, the complexity of the play has not over time been sufficiently deciphered and the real motivation that led Brecht to write *Baal*, is unclear. (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 233)

Carl Pietzcker's book *I command my heart*

In 1988, the West-German literary theorist Carl Pietzcker published his book *I command my heart – Brecht's heart neurosis – a key to his life and writing*. Here Pietzcker presented a thorough psychoanalytic interpretation of Brecht's development as a writer and theatre theorist. One could say that the split between Brechtian scholars, as described above, reached a symbolic peak with Pietzcker's radical intervention. There was already an ongoing ideological debate about Brecht in East and West Germany, but mapping this new controversy by underlining the border between the two Germanys was not possible. Pietzcker's view on Brecht was refused on both sides of the politically symbolic 'wall'. The orthodox Marxists on both sides of the Iron Curtain saw psychoanalysis as a sign of bourgeois decadence, with its emphasis on the individual rather than the collective, and rejected it categorically as can be seen in the following statement by Feuerbach. "The essence of man is not an abstraction inherent in each separate individual. In its reality it is the aggregate of social relationships" (Feuerbach cited in Volosinov, 1976, p.15).

But even those who were not driven ideologically and who were open to Pietzcker's ideas might have asked: How far shall I follow his psychoanalytical interpretations? Laureen Nussbaum, who writes a mainly positive book review about *I command my heart* in 1990, has her difficulties

with Pietzcker's psychoanalytic reading of Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. To a certain extent she agrees with him, but then she concludes:

When, however, he attributes good and evil mother-characteristics in the Setzuan mother-son world to all adult characters, extending even to society itself, and in so doing completely omits the important figure of the water-carrier Wang, and when, in addition, he reads anti-sexual meanings into Shen's comments and oedipal triumph into the defeat of the gods, he becomes less convincing. (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 580)

According to Pietzcker there was much stronger resistance against his book from what he generalizes as "Brecht-philologists, as well as other philologists" (Pietzcker, 1988, p. 249). In the afterword to his book, Pietzcker asks what the reason might be for those who find "a psychoanalytical interpretation so unbearable and generally refuse" the idea. He asks whether it might be "that the philologists, would have to open up to their own psychological conflicts", and concludes: "The psychoanalytical interpretation of writers and their work destroys idealized role models" (Pietzcker, 1988, pp. 249-50). Pietzcker sees Brecht as a role model for those philologists who fiercely refuse a psychoanalytical interpretation of the playwright's work. At this stage Pietzcker leaves little doubt that he is not interested in convincing those anonymous Brecht-philologists whom he fiercely attacks and yet does not name. His aim is to radically oppose any idealisation of Brecht and he asks: "Isn't Heiner Müller right, when he writes: 'To use Brecht, without criticizing him, is betrayal.'?" (Ibid)

And even those who had neither an ideological nor a philological battle to fight with Pietzcker, might have asked after studying his point of view: what is it good for and why do I need to know about Brecht's ambivalence towards his mother and his heart neurosis? My response to these questions, in the context of this study, is that in theatre practice those multiple layers of information about a play-text can be useful. Brecht's life experiences insofar as we can know them present the raw material for plays and the characters within them. A director could be better placed to develop characterization if events/situations in the writer's life appear to correspond in some way to the fictitious lives of the characters.

In the afterword to his book, Pietzcker also poses a new question that he does not pursue in depth but which introduces another angle to be considered: what were his own subconscious motivations in analysing Brecht's work, in particular from the perspective of the writer's heart problems? (Pietzcker, p. 250-256). He is obviously concerned that those who might reject his approach might do so because they regard his personal comments as a form of exhibitionism or self-indulgence (Pietzcker, p.252).

Pietzcker finally makes a connection between "individual psychological *and* common social processes" (Pietzcker, p. 256-258). Although he offers a few interesting examples of those connections from the nineteen sixties, seventies and eighties, this important issue is given just two pages. However, at least one of Pietzcker's examples should be mentioned here, since it pertains to the fact that his book was published in 1988, during a decade when it became possible (in West-Germany) to speak openly about the connection of "individual psychological *and* common social processes". Pietzcker describes how, in a television interview in 1986, the well-known West-German political playwright Franz Xaver Kroetz admitted that along with the social criticism in his plays, he was also always writing about himself, in a fight against an ever-imminent depression. For Kroetz, and Pietzcker, the personal and the political were intertwined and complementary. As I will show, this had also been the case for Brecht. The difference is that he would never have made a comment regarding the connection between his artistic/political work and his mental health in an interview. The image that he chose to expose publically would not have allowed this. However, I can again see a dual causation at play here, and again it is difficult to extricate the two causes from each other and to pin point one as the more contributory to the Brechtian *oeuvre*. Brecht's inability to make or publicly attest to any connection of his work with personal factors was most likely caused by a combination of the fact that the social climate of his time was prohibitive to such admissions, together with his own personal limitations. But one could also conclude that he consciously made the choice not to explore or openly communicate the nature of his psyche, neither in his work, nor in any public interview on the subject.

The two Germanys and the fall of the wall in 1989

What Pietzker could not have foreseen was that just one year after his book was published a crucial historical process would occur that would dramatically change the general perception of Brecht's work. In November 1989, after months of peaceful protest in East Germany, the Berlin Wall came down. It was a bloodless revolution and, less than a year later, the two Germanys were reunited under the banner of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD). Although the international community mostly welcomed the reunification, it also provoked some bad memories. This was particularly so for some inhabitants of Germany's neighbouring countries, who felt threatened by the idea of a united Germany, which in their eyes could have quickly led to a rampant nationalism (a reminder of the all too recent Nazi era). At the same time, the effects of another historical process that made the fall of the Berlin Wall possible – the downfall of the Soviet Union and the end of its communist era – had just begun to unfold. This again had an enormous effect on the reunification process and consequently on Brecht's legacy in East and West Germany.

The question for German theatre was how to make Brecht's work viable in a democratic society that had voted for capitalism. The reunification process would show that this vote was much more complex than it had ostensibly appeared. Many people in East Germany had made a choice for which they could not foresee the consequences. Disillusioned and frustrated with the reality of capitalism, some even now still revere the past, and are described as being in a state of 'Ostalgie' (East-nostalgia). But still, the fading of communism as an ideological power raised serious doubts about the usefulness of a political writer who had clearly chosen a Marxist perspective on art and its role in society. Brecht was never a member of the communist party, not in Germany, nor in any other country. Nevertheless his position was clear. He had voted against capitalism and he used art as a weapon to fight it. If this had been the sole truth about Brecht in 1989, he would no longer have had relevance for the theatres of Germany and many other countries around the world. For until the global financial crisis in 2008 shook the world, there was the common belief that capitalism was the winner

in an ideological battle that had dominated most of the 20th century and Brecht was clearly on the side of the losing party. However, although one could say about him that in a political sense 'his heart was beating left,' there was so much more to Brecht and to his enormous literary productivity than being driven by a political ideology. The more neutral image of him, that of a "Classic of Rationalism," does not capture the whole reality of the artist's life and work either. "A Classic of Rationalism" was the label that the German publishing house Suhrkamp-Verlag used on the occasion of Brecht's 90th birthday, to honour him and to promote his books. But as I shall argue, this is only a partial and limiting view of his work.

"Which Brecht?"

This thesis will examine the complexity of Brecht's creative processes and how they changed, rather than trying to pin the late artist down in one neat description. The need to examine this complexity is outlined by Meg Mumford, in the introduction to her book *Bertolt Brecht*, in which she poses the question "which Brecht?" She then mentions the variety of images he has accumulated:

Some describe him as Europe's most famous Marxist playwright, director and theatre theorist. Or, Germany's answer to Shakespeare, but with a political twist. Others regard him as a genius who, despite his unfortunate political credo, remained a poet of eternally suffering and enduring humanity. Given that Brecht developed a respect for Marx, Shakespeare and fame he might not have objected to two of these descriptions. But it is this writer's position that Brecht had little time for the idea of eternal suffering. (Mumford, 2009, p.1)

Mumford's main focus is on Brecht's:

... acute responsiveness to Europe's tumultuous political landscape between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the Cold War.... Faced with immense social upheaval, Brecht's consistent response was to celebrate and attempt to master change. This book places particular emphasis on that attempt because it seeks to explain why Brecht is still a beacon for political performance makers. (Mumford, 2009, p.1-2)

As an actor, director, theatre maker and performance lecturer, I support Mumford's emphasis on that attempt and see my research as complementary to this approach. However, in my focus on Brecht's heart problem and the emotional landscape of his life and theatre work, it might appear that I am ignoring the idea that we can still learn much from Brecht as a political playwright at the beginning of the 21st century. This is clearly not the case. I would like to underline the fact that my research (on Brecht and his heart problem) originates in my wish to be able to use his work as a source of inspiration and guidance for a politically engaged contemporary theatre. My findings will not give the answer to the question of who Brecht really was, because it is more salient to ask "which Brecht" are we talking about?

Analysing heart matters in Brecht's creative development

In the following, I will describe a number of steps I had to take and some difficulties I had to overcome, in order to analyse with as much precision and clarity as possible, the heart matters in Brecht's creative development. In order to achieve this precision and clarity it is necessary to systematically analyse the many meanings of the term and concept 'heart', and also its usage in Brecht's work and in this exegesis.

The word 'heart' can refer, explicitly or implicitly, to a number of different things. Firstly there is the concept of the heart as a physical organ. There is the general understanding of the importance that the organ plays in the functioning, and indeed survival of the whole body.

Secondly, the word 'heart', in vernacular usage, has come to represent certain positive or desirable emotions and/or values. For example, to 'have heart' or to 'take heart' means to have courage or hope; to 'have a heart' means to have compassion; and the 'heart of the matter' means to inspect the matter in question in its essence or essential truth. Generally, the heart is the symbolic place of the emotions and/or values. This is evident in expressions such as 'a heart of gold', implying an individual's pure and good values; and a 'broken heart' indicative of a failed love relationship of one form or another wherein the metaphorical heart breaks because of pressures

of sadness and disappointment. By the same token, positive values can change into negative and/or destructive feelings and a heart assume attributes such as stone, ice or darkness.

Then there is the correlation of the heart with love in its many forms, but in particular with romantic love. This correlation takes the form of the visual symbol of the heart, or 'love-heart'. Interestingly, this symbol is not an exact replica of the physical heart, but rather a romanticized version of the heart, neatened and generally more visually palatable.

My usage of the word 'heart' is in both the concrete and the abstract/symbolic/metaphoric understandings of the word. I refer to the heart as a physical organ, with the weight of the importance it plays in the functioning and survival of the body and to the anxiety provoked when that functioning is threatened (Brecht's heart cramps/fear of death). I also refer to the heart as a placeholder for emotions, in particular love (golden heart), and hope/happiness (Happy Buddha).

My understanding of Brecht's usage of the word, both in *Baal* and in his diaries, is as the physical organ and as the symbolic placeholder of emotions. In the 1918 and 1919 versions, Baal suffers a heart cramp and also his death seems to be related to a problem he has with his heart. Later in this exegesis, I will quote Brecht using the expression "an unclean heart" to describe his lover (later his first wife) Marianne Zoff, whose behaviour towards him at the time did not please him. This indicates that he also understood the heart to be the abstract placeholder of emotions and/or values. Throughout this exegesis, I argue that Brecht's usage of the word 'heart' carried, consciously or subconsciously, the weight and significance of his physical heart condition, together with or overlaid onto the word's more immediate metaphorical meanings.

My research question regarding the heart has evolved during its process of exploration. Originally I focused exclusively on Brecht's heart problem, narrowing down my area of interest to the author's biography. This occurred particularly during a phase of comparative textual analysis of the different versions of *Baal*. Brecht and the title character of his first play

sometimes seemed to merge into each other, although it was very obvious that they were not identical. The fact that Brecht chose some qualities and features for Baal that were almost the antithesis of his own, made this very clear to me. A view of Baal as an alter ego for his creator poses all kinds of intriguing questions. For instance, what are we to make of the scene where Baal seduces a young woman he picks up off the street:

SOPHIE: You rushed up to me in the street. I thought it was an orangutan.

BAAL: I know. It's April. It's growing dark, and you smell me. That's how it is with animals. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 23)

Through Baal, Brecht unreservedly expresses what we may call the animalistic side of man. We might see this as an instance of the playwright projecting hidden qualities onto the character, or perhaps compensating for the lack of certain qualities, which he wished were his own.

At this point I need to state the important fact that my background is acting, directing and teaching, not psychoanalysis. Therefore the approach in my research has gravitated towards a search for the embodiment of a play text on stage. Brecht incorporated the world around him into his writing and he created the world of the theatrical play through the use of images and, significantly for this research, often incorporating metaphors of the body. I work with the physical process of creating performance, one that is anchored in the body and often (not always) directed by the text. I have to make the ideas and the play-text embodied. In my doctoral studies, both worlds are intertwined: that of the three-dimensional space of the rehearsal-room and the stage, and of the multi-dimensional meanings of the play-text.

In fact my fascination with *Baal*, in the first place, was the physicality of the language and the almost painful lust for life that it expresses. In 1998, the year of Brecht's 100th Birthday, I was invited by the Centre for Performance Research (CPR) and the University of Wales in Aberystwyth to direct Brecht's *Baal* for CPR's Past Masters conference on Brecht and Eisenstein. I obtained the different versions of *Baal* that had been published by Suhrkamp-Verlag and also came across Pietzcker's book and so became

aware of the heart issue. But it was the realization that there was only the one English translation of *Baal*, from the 1922 version, which really made me think. The only version of the play to which my students in Aberystwyth had access did not mention Baal's heart problems at all. As the director, I had to make a decision about how to deal with this situation. This was primarily an artistic decision, not a question of academic rigour and precision. I wanted to connect with the young playwright Brecht in this production and I wanted to give my actors, who were all around the same age as Brecht was when he began to work on *Baal*, a chance to play with the 100-year-old monument and hopefully revive the original vitality of the artist. 'Augsburg – Aberystwyth' was the title of a short presentation that I gave at the Past Masters conference after the participants witnessed a performance of *Baal*. It was a passionate plea to understand the young author Brecht as someone driven to create out of an intense fear of his own mortality. At this stage, I had no ambition to follow up on this issue through academic research. The research question I would formulate seven years later in my doctoral proposal emerged in the Aberystwyth experience and is now being addressed.

Witnessing the massive celebrations for the 100th Birthday of the 'Classic of Rationalism', I felt compassion towards the young Brecht who had experienced an agonizing form of artistic awakening at the very beginning of his career. It was an awakening that came through a shock, a 'heart-shock' as Brecht's doctor would diagnose (Pietzcker, 1988, p. 14). The writer suffered panic attacks and heart cramps that made him feel as if the devil had visited him, as is evident from diary entries of 22nd October 1916:

No. It is senseless to live. Last night I had a heart cramp that left me with astonishment, this time the devil did first class work. Today I philosophize again... (GBA, vol. 26, p. 109)

Pietzcker argues that he consequently developed a deep fear of death that would torture him for the rest of his life (Pietzcker, 2008, p. 134). For a long time I was mostly annoyed with the fact that the older Brecht appeared to ignore his early struggles. Instead he created personas, initially of a cool and objective *enfant terrible*, and later those of a wise and always somewhat

distant teacher. My whole position was far from being objective and I knew that the only way to let Brecht survive in my acting, directing and teaching work was to conduct an artistic research project that would address my own ambivalence towards him. This decision on my part recalls Pietzcker's hypothesis that in analysing someone else's work we are often also trying to understand ourselves (Pietzcker, 1988, p. 250). In my role as a theatre artist, I required an understanding of Brecht and his work that directly related to acting, directing and how to teach the two crafts. Unlike Pietzcker, psychoanalysis and literature were not my main focus.

My interest is not first and foremost in the question of what early trauma caused Brecht's fear of death, but how he transformed trauma and fear into productive work as a playwright and theatre theorist. I do not reject Pietzcker's approach; indeed I see it as crucial to my work. However I had to formulate my research question according to my background and what I wanted to achieve. The starting point was a comparative textual analysis of the five different versions of *Baal*, 1918-1955. I wanted to understand why Brecht omitted the original autobiographical allusion to his heart problem, and what that meant about and for his development as a playwright and for his theories on acting.

The first two versions of *Baal* are hymns to the battle between life and death, which almost crushes the artist Brecht. He is fully involved in the writing process, implants his weak/troubled heart into the body of text and creates a striking and defiant physicality through the language of the texts. But even in writing for the theatre, in being a playwright, the split between head and body is evident. The writer is obviously still in his body sitting at a desk, or walking around with a dictaphone. But he creates a world with words that does not exist in the same three-dimensional space as the body does. A physical body rising from the paper is a banal cliché in literature and I am not suggesting that this is what Brecht intended to create. But this is what happens in the theatrical production of a play script. I believe that he wanted a physical experience through writing and wanted the reader likewise to physically experience his language. It is not unusual for a young author to express this vital urge and to reject the idea of living in an ivory tower. But it

is conspicuous how strongly Brecht emphasises his hunger for life and his conviction that he just had the one life, in his early writing:

Although I am only 22 years old, grown up in the small town Augsburg am Lech, and have seen only very little of this world, except the meadows around town with trees, and some other towns – but not for long, I hold the wish to have the world completely handed over to me. I wish all things to be handed over to *me* as well as the power over all animals, and my reasons for this demand are, that I exist only *once*. (Brecht 1919/20 in *GBA*, vol. 26, p.118)

What did Brecht do to prove that his vitality was strong enough to survive his own battle with death? First of all, in choosing to become a writer, he chose an art form that would give him a chance to live beyond his death. Secondly and perhaps even more importantly, he confronted the fact that his heart was weak as is evident in a diary entry of 21st October 1916 – “I command my heart” (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 108). This declaration became a turning point for the man and the writer. Thirdly, in the expression of his own will power, he developed his aesthetics, which enabled him to hide and camouflage his fear of death, thus making him appear cool and invincible. There were certainly many more artistic and personal life strategies, which he developed to cope with his fear of death that he tested and/or changed throughout his life. In my exegesis, however, I focus on these first three strategies mentioned above and the complementary aspects of his political orientation.

Brecht had difficulties incorporating *Baal* into his leftwing image

It is very obvious that Brecht had difficulties incorporating *Baal* into his leftwing image as a writer. Tired and frustrated, he admitted in 1954: “the play lacks wisdom” (*GBA*, vol.1, p. 517). He tried several times to rework the text and there are a few examples of how he worked on play texts concurrent with these attempts that show parallels to *Baal*. One is particularly interesting when it comes to Brecht’s ideas about immortality and the (un)written heart: initially intending it to be an opera, he started to write *Journeys of the God of Happiness* during his years of exile in the United States (the text would never

actually progress beyond a fragment). For him, this was a material “that again has to do with the fundamental idea behind *Baal*” (GBA, vol.10.2, p.1257). Brecht described the message of the fragment as follows: “*It is impossible to entirely kill the human urge for happiness*” (Italics Brecht) (GBA, vol.10.2, p.1258). His inspiration for *Journeys of the God of Happiness* was a small sculpture of a Happy Buddha that he bought in New York’s Chinatown.

Particularly significant for my research is that, although Brecht clearly links the fragment to *Baal*, the word ‘heart’ is not once mentioned in the former. This important omission eventually led me to the question of what effect the implantation of a ‘heart’ into the fragment would have, and how this might be realised in a theatrical production of the same.

Journeys of the Happy Buddha and Baal

In 2008, the creative component of my doctoral studies, a production entitled *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* was presented at the World Puppetry Festival, UNIMA (Union International de la Marionette) in Perth. The script was inspired by Brecht’s play-fragment *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, which I had translated with my daughter, Kaya Räuker, the year before (Appendix 1)³. This translation took place with the permission of Suhrkamp Verlag, the German publisher who holds the rights for the majority of Brecht’s work. I was also granted permission to use this translation as part of my doctoral investigations⁴.

³ In 2011 professional translator Enid Sedgwick and I discussed the English translation of *Journeys of the God of Happiness* and made some modifications.

⁴ Translations (whether of artistic work or of a text about art) can be perceived as art-works in themselves. Experiences in translating Brecht during my studies were extremely interesting and also challenging. Working on my own and with the collaboration of others showed me repeatedly that there is no one correct way to transfer Brecht from his German mother-tongue into another language, or in this particular case, into English. In some cases where Brecht had been already translated into English, I nevertheless did my own translation, because I knew that that way I would have a different connection and a deeper understanding of the text. On the other hand, a translation of *Journeys of the God of Happiness* was necessary, simply because there was no English translation of the fragment available. I wanted to do a performance based on the play fragment and therefore I needed my performers and other collaborators in Australia to understand what Brecht had written.

As mentioned earlier, *Journeys of the God of Happiness* was “based on the same fundamental idea” as Brecht’s earlier play *Baal*. The fragment can be seen as Brecht’s attempt to transform his first play into something much more politically correct, something that could be a lot more easily digested by his left-wing audiences, and a lot more easily assimilated into his by then quite compelling body of work. Brecht explained to the collaborating composer, Paul Dessau, when they were discussing the end of the opera/play fragment, “Happiness is: Communism” (*GBA*, vol.10.2, p.1258).

So what was happiness to Baal? Clearly not communism. Although his affinity with consumerism had an almost mythological dimension – “Munching, Baal can graze broad pastures down to stubble” (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 4) – he is not compatible with the capitalist world either. His appetite for schnapps and women is not the only thing that ruins him. Originally his uncompromising egotism arises from an awareness that life could end at any moment. He aggressively tries to deny this inevitability, consequently hurting the people who come close to him. As Pietzcker observes, this counter-phobic behaviour is one of the possible patterns of reaction for someone suffering from a heart neurosis. For Baal, the character, it is a way to combat his anxiety and, instead of surrendering to his panic attacks with precautions (phobic behaviour), he acts carelessly and does not even try to be on the safe side in any psychological or sociological sense (Pietzcker, 1988, p. 83).

Brecht in the 20th and 21st centuries

Brecht’s internal battle with his fear of death and his loss of faith in his own heart’s capacity to endure can be related to the objective historical situation he experienced during his lifetime. During the first half of the 20th century, qualities such as faith, hope, and trust had been almost completely torn to pieces by two world wars, the holocaust and an ideological battle between fascism and communism. Brecht’s survival strategies worked not just for him but were also useful for many other people, who needed to be able to de-sensitise themselves to the traumatic experiences that the

twentieth century had brought. He was “an example in ‘dark times’” (Pietzcker, 1988, p. 249).

I want to use this research as part of an attempt to understand the function of theatre in the 21st century and ask whether, or better ‘which’ Brecht still has a place in it. He rigorously searched for theatre’s role in the 20th century and asked the following questions:

How can the theatre be entertaining and didactic at the same time? How can it be taken out of the intellectual drug trafficking and from a place of illusions and made instead into a place of experience. How can the not free, ignorant, thirsty to be free and thirsty for knowledge man of our century, the tortured and heroic, abused and inventive, changeable and the world-changing man of this terrible and great century get his theatre, which helps him, to master himself and the world? (*GBA*, vol. 22.1, 1993, p. 557)

Brechtian theatre in education and actor training

To raise political awareness through Brecht’s works in the future, it is important that the question of which Brecht we are talking about will be answered, specifically in terms of education. The following quotation demonstrates the level of complexity that educators face, when teaching an overview of Brecht’s works:

Brecht, as both playwright and producer, was able to match his material and his methods ... As a result of this, it is very difficult to study his plays satisfactorily without considering the appropriate performance methods. Over the four decades of his work in the theatre, his ideas were constantly developing and so it is only too easy to misapply the ideas of one period to a play written at a different time. (David Bradby, Philip Thomas and Kenneth Pickering, 1983, p. 40)

For the scholar and educator alike, Brecht is a moving target. Difficulties in dealing with Brecht’s legacy start even before the complexity mentioned above has been acknowledged. The sheer amount of artistic and theoretical work that Brecht produced throughout his life can be overwhelming. Simplification often seems the only strategy to integrate the world-famous playwright into the curriculum. This has particularly negative consequences, given that Brecht had already inadvertently caused confusion regarding his position on certain theatre phenomena in his original writings.

When it comes to acting and emotions, Brecht himself admits in 1954 that the “misleading” and “impatient” style of writing in the ‘Short Organum’ has caused a “misunderstanding” (*GBA*, vol. 23, p. 567). The consequences that this mis-reading has caused today would probably be frustrating for Brecht to see and to hear. Many student performers and also professionals dealing with Brechtian theatre think that they are not allowed to have or show any emotions. The consequence is often that the way actors move on stage is characteristically stiff and their delivery of text is monotonous. In my opinion, such misunderstandings are the biggest dangers for Brecht’s legacy and they need to be addressed urgently in theatre and education.

It is obviously a challenge to deal with Brecht’s multi-layered legacy. To include his heart problems into scholarly discussion and, consequently, into teaching Brecht, might seem too big a risk to some researchers and academics. They might be worried that this will increase the confusion about who Brecht was, what he was doing when and why. On the contrary, I believe that we now have the chance to come to a new and clearer understanding of the great artist’s works. Brecht experienced a very personal struggle when it came to the human heart. I would argue that we have to look into his psychophysical problem to understand his development as a writer.

It might also prove fruitful to see his psychophysical problem in the context of his major literary influences at the time and the role the heart had in their works. These influences include Aristotle, Shakespeare, Nietzsche and the Bible. However, such a comparison is outside the context of this thesis and will at this stage have to remain a potential subject for an important future study.

The heart and its cultural context

The literary, philosophical and musical movement, called the Romantics, captured the whole of Europe during the 19th century, it is however most strongly associated with Germany ... In Romantics not thinking but feeling took the highest rank, and the unbreakable belief reigned, that heart and soul had entirely their own movements and laws. Instead of

watching the world as a machine, like the Cartesians, the Romantics saw it as a living organism" (Hollmer, 1997, p. 148).

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), whose early writings had strongly influenced German Romantics, once asked himself during a creative crisis: "Am I still the same one ... who had a heart to lovingly embrace the whole world? And this heart is dead now ..." (Goethe cited in Hollmer, 1997, p. 67). Goethe's biggest concern was that those "refreshing tears" would not flow anymore, now that his heart was dead. German Romantic men felt comfortable with crying and other emotional outbursts.

A German adolescent boy during the First World War (1914 -1918) had different duties demanded of him by the fatherland. The young Brecht wanted to follow in the footsteps of Goethe (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 54), which meant he wanted to become as important as a writer. However, he did not want to be known as a romantic, sensitive man, whose texts were stained with tears and heart-blood. In 1914 he wrote that a "new blossoming of German literature begins ... But not shameless exposure of one's own weakness, not desperately increased little feelings, like "Modernism" [die "Moderne"] loves it, will then decide, but power, love and truth" (GBA, vol. 21, p. 25). Although this comment is not targeted against the Romantics, we understand that Brecht's appreciation for Goethe was not for Goethe's emotionality.

During 1915/16, Brecht became a pacifist (Rischbieter, 1974, p. 7), but he did not change his views on literary values. In 1918, he is adamant about his dislike for the contemporary art of the time. "This Expressionism is dreadful" (GBA, vol. 28, p. 58). Brecht missed the vitality he wanted for his own writing, and found expressionism pompous, and filled with hot air. His own plays should be "with heart and blood in [them]" as he stated two years later. But of course, this was not to be the dying romantic heart nor the expressionistic heart and, most important by then, not his own weak heart. Brecht started to understand that something else would make him famous:

I can compete with the ultra-modernists in hunting for new forms and experimenting with my feelings. But I keep realizing that the essence of art is simplicity, grandeur and sensitivity, and that the

essence of its form is coolness. (Brecht 1920, cited in Willett & Manheim, 1994, p. xiv)

In 1921 he described this new way of working as having “a hot heart beating in a cold man” (GBA, vol. 26, p. 215).

The history of the heart myth in its European tradition goes way back to the ancient cultures and religious beliefs of the Middle East (Høystad, 2006, p.10). The Ancient Egyptians practised a pre-funeral ritual whereby a ‘heart-stone’, representing the deceased person’s heart, would be weighed against a symbol of the goddess Maat (the Ancient Egyptian Goddess of justice). If the two objects were equal in weight, that is if they achieved a balance, it was believed that this person would have a harmonious time in the afterlife (Hoystad, 2006, p. 25). The Ancient Egyptians practised this ritual as a symbol of an identical ritual that they believed took place in the afterlife (except here it was the actual heart of the deceased person that was weighed). Étienne contextualizes this mythical ritual as such:

The ritual began when the deceased arrived in the presence of forty-two assessors – assistants to the god Osiris – seated in a two-door hall. The deceased would proclaim complete innocence before them ... This declaration was not sufficient however, and only a confrontation between the deceased person’s heart (which for the Egyptians was the centre of thought) and Maat ... would be able to determine whether the deceased was worthy of the kingdom of Osiris. (Étienne, 2006, p.84)

Additionally, the heart was the only organ returned to the body after mummification when the body was sent on a boat into the afterlife. Hoystad makes reference to the Ancient Egyptians’ belief that the heart contained a person’s memories, which accounts for its role in the rituals described above (2006, p. 25).

Beliefs and rituals of the Middle East had wide spread influence in subsequent worldviews. Egyptian spiritual concepts influenced the Jewish religion and from here Christianity received its foundation. For what we might call the European heart myth, the Middle Eastern influences on the development of Ancient Greek culture were as important as those effecting Christianity. Arguably, Brecht was therefore struggling not only with his own

weak heart, but also as an artist he was confronted with a heart myth that had had a very prominent role in European culture since the time of the Greek philosophers. Of these, the most influential philosopher, Aristotle, placed the heart at the very centre of human existence and saw it as the seat of the soul (Høystad, 2006, p. 54). Brecht's concept of a Non-Aristotelian theatre is in direct opposition to its emphasis on the heart. He questioned and challenged the Aristotelian concept of Catharsis. "This cleansing occurs owing to the peculiar psychical act of *empathy* of the spectator with the acting persons, who are imitated by the actors" (GBA, vol. 22.1, p.171). The polemical position that Brecht took towards empathy will be questioned in my exegesis.

As mentioned above, an ancient heart-centric anthropology can be found in Christian religious teachings, and as Pabst states: "The reader of Brecht's work will very soon notice the frequency of the word "God" or religious termini" (1977, p.17). Christianity and particularly the readings of the Bible played an important part in Brecht's upbringing. His early influences on the making of his own heart myth (in his writings) came from his Protestant mother. She chose the following biblical aphorism for his confirmation: "It is an exquisite thing, that one's heart will become strong" (Pietzcker, 1988, p. 35). It was his mother's belief that this would only happen if one believed in the one God. Helmut Gier comments on the influence of religious teachings on Brecht in his book *The young Brecht*: "That the lasting influence of the protestant education and particularly the close familiarity with the Bible left their mark on Brecht's personality and writing, has become a commonplace of Brecht-literature" (Gier, 1996, p. 18).

For William Shakespeare, heart and soul operated in a powerful alliance. He praised all facets of human love in his plays and not just the devotion of the heart to a monotheistic belief system. He expressed this concept with dozens of heart-metaphors in his plays (Høystad, 2006, p. 170). In my exegesis I will look into Brecht's fascination with, and some critical comments regarding Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Already in 1915, the seventeen-year-old Brecht mentions the play in a letter to his friend Fritz Gehweyer: "I

create monologues in iambic feet. Hohenester talks big. We read Hamlet, one scene. We talk about Zarathustra ..." (GBA, vol. 28, p.18).

While Brecht always writes about Shakespeare with great respect (albeit not for the character 'Hamlet'), his connections with the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and his novel *Thus spoke Zarathustra* are more hidden: "Nietzsche was the first and most lasting, but from the beginning deliberately and carefully concealed teacher of Brecht" (Christoph Subik quoted in Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 144). Nietzsche also writes about the heart in his aphorisms, such as the two below:

The 'kingdom of Heaven' is a condition of the heart – not something that comes 'upon the earth' or 'after death'.
(Nietzsche, 1977, p. 190)

One ought to hold on to one's heart; for if one lets it go, one soon loses control of the head too. (In Sánchez, 2004, p. 120)

The fact that Brecht notes in his diaries in 1916 "I command my heart" might be related to Nietzsche's advice to stay in control. But even if Brecht was not aware of this quotation, he was fascinated with the "will for power", that Nietzsche presented in his philosophy, most explicitly in *Zarathustra*. Hillesheim even believes that Brecht saw "analogies to his own life plan in Nietzsche's work" (Hillesheim, 2005a, p.139). Although there is little doubt that Nietzsche was a major influence, there is an indication that Brecht had contradictory feelings about his philosophy. "I have a sense for values, inheritance from my father. But I also have a sense, that one can entirely disregard the term value (Baal)" 1919/20 (GBA, vol.26, p.116,).

The heartlessness of the character Baal in Brecht's first play can be seen as a tribute to Nietzsche's demand that one had to leave morals behind, in order to create oneself anew. Nietzsche's idea about the *Übermensch*, however, depends very much on the ability to cope with, and even enjoy being alone. "Zarathustra left his home land ... at the age of thirty and went into the mountains. Here he relished his spirit and his solitude" (Nietzsche, quoted in Hillesheim, 2008, p. 140). Brecht writes in his diaries in 1916:

One becomes strong, if one is solitary, and the best relationship with people is: far away. – If one lives in solitude for five years, one cannot talk anymore and becomes sick. Now I have been alone for about four years.

.... Because of the heart cramps the doctor tells me to stay in bed. I don't go to bed. One gets sick there. I sit at the desk.... but I cannot work nothing. I cannot work nothing; but sometimes I think about the girl that lives in Garden Street and who has mainly still/quiet eyes, which are beautiful and intelligent and in which I'm a tiger. Since I've been sick, I don't see her any more. That's a pity. (GBA, vol. 26, p.107)

To be lonely was very difficult for Brecht. He needed to be with other people to be creative and to feel alive. The ideas in *Thus spoke Zarathustra* fascinated him, but he could not go down this path:

Brecht wanted recognition, feed back, reaction, being admired, which then also happened. From the beginning he needed a public, because otherwise he wouldn't have become what he most ardently wished for: a famous writer. (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 143)

More than 10 years after the above 1916 entries in his diaries Brecht wrote:

I've always concerned myself with people, I don't understand it. It was such an exclusive addiction for me, to meet people, that I didn't pay attention to anything else and even thoughts, that didn't directly say something about people, I didn't understand. Now that I'm almost 30 years old machines, philosophies, financial businesses are still alien to me.... It is possible that this is how it goes for many people, but to me it seems unnatural. The animals surely don't have this interest in their species, and I want to fight it in me. Because on top of that, I don't have much esteem for people. (GBA, vol. 26, p.293)

Brecht's politicised focus on social issues must also be seen in the context of the above quotation. He felt little connection with abstract philosophies, and was only compelled to write about people. However, there is a paradox in this, because he also said that he didn't "have much esteem for people".

In his theatre theories, Brecht often takes a polemical position when it comes to feelings and emotions. For actors, directors and in an even more

extreme way for a student of theatre, this polemical position does not particularly help to understand what Brecht was actually suggesting. I argue that this problem is not only related to his style and aesthetics in writing, but to a personal conflict the author had experienced since his early adolescence. It is my suggestion that with his first play, *Baal*, he uses writing as a medium to deal with this conflict. Combined with his diaries at the time and confirmations from witnesses and friends, it is evident that Brecht's heart problems had an influence on his development as a writer. The different versions of *Baal* and the connected fragment *Journeys of the God of Happiness* give us the chance to look at Brecht's development as a playwright and theorist in this specific context.

Biographical Timeline – Bertolt Brecht

(For the sake of brevity I have not included all of Brecht's 40 plays)

BAVARIA 1898-1923

- 1898 10 February: Eugen Berthold Brecht born in Augsburg
- 1915/16 Gathers like minded friends around him, to discuss and develop artistic ideas, including Casper Neher
- 1918/19 Writes first and second versions of *Baal*
Son Frank born (to Paula Banholzer)
- 1920 1 May: Mother dies
Moves to Munich
- 1922 29 September: premiere of *Drums In the Night*
Receives Kleist Prize, for *Drums In the Night*, *In the Jungle of Cities* and *Baal*
3 November: marries Marianne Zoff
- 1923 Daughter Hanne born (to Marianne Zoff)
8 December: premiere of *Baal*

BERLIN 1924-1933

- 1924 Moves to Berlin
Premiere of *In the Jungle of Cities*
Son Stefan born (to Helene Weigel)
- 1926 14 February: *Life Story of the Man Baal* performed
Begins study of Marxism
- 1927 First book of poems: *Die Hauspostille*
- 1928 31 August: premiere of *Threepenny Opera*, in collaboration with Kurt Weill
- 1929 22 November: marries Helene Weigel
- 1930 Openly declares his alignment with revolutionary Marxism
- 1933 Hitler gains power in Germany
Burning of the Reichstag, Brecht leaves Germany the next day

**YEARS OF EXILE:
SCANDINAVIA 1933-1941**

- 1935 Visits Moscow, views performance by world-renowned Peking Opera Performer Mei Lan Fang
- 1936 First notes on 'Verfemdung'
- 1941 Premiere of *Mother Courage*

USA 1942-1947

- 1946 Begins collaboration with Charles Laughton on the English translation and production of *The Life of Galileo*
- 1947 Questioned by the Committee for Un-American Activities
5 October: leaves the USA

ZURICH 1947-1948

- 1948 February: Premiere of Brecht's *Antigone*, produced by Brecht and Neher; Helene Weigel's first professional appearance since 1933
Begins rehearsals of *Mother Courage* in East Berlin

BERLIN 1949-1956

- 1949 11 January: German premiere of *Mother Courage*
The Berliner Ensemble founded
- 1950 Granted Austrian citizenship
The Berliner Ensemble becomes one of the leading Theatre companies in the world
- 1953 First two volumes of Complete Dramatic works
- 1954 The Berliner Ensemble gets its own theatre and wins first prize at the Theatre of Nations in Paris, for *Mother Courage*
- 1955 Receives the Stalin Peace Prize in Moscow
- 1956 14 August: Dies in East Berlin of heart attack

Chapter 1

***Baal* and the heart**

A comparative textual analysis regarding the heart

The heart-neurosis is an anxiety-neurosis usually starting with an acute heart-attack, experienced as an acute oppressive feeling, which is normally accompanied by feelings of inner restlessness, a fit of dizziness, shivering, head aches and sleeping disorder. The patient often suffers feelings of suffocation during an attack; his fear is mostly a fear of death, often with fear, his heart stops. (Pietzcker, 1988, pp.10-11)

Five different versions of *Baal*

Baal was Brecht's first full-length play.⁵ "I hope to get somewhere with it", he wrote in a letter to his friend Caspar Neher in June 1918, a few months after finishing what was most likely the second draft of the work (Schmidt, 1966, p. 191). It was not just that he wanted 'to get somewhere' as a playwright, he wanted to reach the top. In 1917, he posed for a photo in a niche on the facade of the theatre in Augsburg. In the place where he was standing, a sculpture of the German cultural icon Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), had recently been removed to be restored. Brecht's comment when posing in the statue's place was that he would one day be the new Schiller (Pietzcker, 1988, p.193). This arrogance, which seemed so light-hearted at the time, would become his artistic label. But this driving ambition had a dark side caused by a troubled heart condition and his related fear of death. It is astonishing, how the young author fought this fear of death with a gallows humour. To present himself as the replacement for Schiller, the renowned writer who had died more than one hundred years before, meant that Brecht believed his literary works would one day be as important (or perhaps even more important) than Schiller's. The gallows humour lay in the fact that

⁵ *Die Bibel* (GBA, vol.1. pp. 7-15) was "Brecht's first dramatic work". (Hillesheim, 2005, p. 57) "As a fifteen year old Brecht writes his first dramatic work in late summer 1913." (GBA, vol.1, p. 501)

Brecht had just started his body of work and, according to accounts from his diaries, was still struggling with occasional heart cramps that made him doubt if he would even see the light of the next day.

Looking at the different versions of *Baal*, we should keep in mind that the young Brecht had two very clear aims, to survive through working and to become “a famous writer” (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 143). What is most astonishing is that Brecht was right. He did become a German literary monument and an icon of world theatre, who today stands alongside Schiller. In 1918 however, there was still a long way to go. The *Baal* of that year was just a beginning: in 1919, the next version was finished. To keep working meant to stay alive. Restless and insatiable, Brecht constantly re-worked and developed his writings. This suggests that it was at least in part his desperate wish for immortality that enabled him to develop as a writer. *Baal* was eventually published in 1922. By then many changes had been made to the original version.

What were the motivations for these changes? One driving force was very important – Brecht wanted and needed to be published. Censorship was one issue; self-censorship was another, as will be uncovered in this exegesis. The year 1922 brought success and the first soundings of fame for Brecht. At the end of November in this year, he won the prestigious ‘Kleist prize’ for *Drums in the Night*, *In the Jungle of Cities* and *Baal*. In 1926 another version of *Baal* was presented, *Life Story of the Man Baal*, wherein major changes had been made. Brecht had by then already established a unique style that he was still refining. The *Baal* of 1922 seemed by now to be from a very long time ago. Ultimately though, Brecht had to find a place for the play in his collected works. In 1954, two years before his death, he still seemed ideologically embarrassed by *Baal*, with his comment “the play lacks wisdom” (Schmidt, 1968, p.111). It is precisely this embarrassment that makes this play so interesting for me as a researcher.

However it seems that, unlike in his later years, it was not ideological embarrassment with which Brecht was initially struggling, when he desperately wanted *Baal* to be published. There were certain autobiographical issues that had found their way into the play that he was

intent on censoring, the most important of which is the motif of the heart, in particular the compromised, weak heart. It is the censoring of this personal psychophysical weakness that I will now track through the five different versions of *Baal*. I would like to acknowledge Dieter Schmidt's groundbreaking work as an editor on *Baal – Drei Fassungen* (Three Versions) (Schmidt, 1966) and *Baal – Der boese Baal der asoziale – Texte, Varianten, Materialien* (Bad Baal – the Antisocial Man – Texts, Variations, Materials) (Schmidt, 1968). Without this meticulously organized material, it would have been impossible for me to compare the 1918, 1919, 1926 and 1955 versions of *Baal*. In examining the 1922 version, I will use the English translation of *Brecht, Collected Plays: One* (*Baal*-translation by Peter Tegel, in Willett & Manheim, 1998, pp.1-61).

Versions 1918 and 1919

Brecht's first attempt to write *Baal* was for a long time interpreted exclusively as a literary counter-draft or reply to Hanns Johst's expressionist novel, *Der Einsame* (*The Lonely One*). Hillesheim comments that this viewpoint completely ignored the complexity of Brecht's motivations. He also points out that there are clear autobiographical elements in the play that reveal *Baal* is much more about Brecht, than it is a criticism of expressionism (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 257).

My immediate task will be to look at Baal's heart problem in the 1918 and 1919 versions. It is in the second attic scene of both versions (Schmidt, 1966, pp. 21-22 and pp. 96-97) that Baal suffers from identical heart cramps.

BAAL: ... this heart will not sing out, and the chest is filled with mucous. Blood fills my eyes, and my hands tremble like leaves. I want to give birth! I must give birth! My heart beats very fast and shallow. But every now and then hollow like a cloven hoof, you know! The smell of the wild May-nights is in me. Love is like a maelstrom, that tears the clothes off one's body, and that buries one naked, after one has seen sky, blue, immeasurable, nothing but sky, blue, insatiable, open.... BAAL rises laboriously, goes to the window: Morning air! Like ants, these redundant little beings! Nevertheless: They are spectators. A

deep drag of air into the lungs! Then continue to toil! I want to create summer! Wild, red, voracious. A blue sky, pressing down, a load of sky above! The trees sweat at night. Dew. *Turning round, he puts his hand to his chest, staggering.* Damn! My heart! It is only 3 nights and 2 acts and already? Nonsense. The dear Lord says 'Halt', only afterwards. *He falls forward onto a chair, groans.* (1919 version, Schmidt, 1966, p. 96/97) The above text is identical in the 1918 and 1919 versions, except the 1918 version continues after "The dear Lord says 'Halt', only afterwards." as such: "He usually squeezes everything out of someone! The hamster!" (Schmidt, 1966, pp. 21)

When Baal faces death in the scene: 'Woods. A wooden hut', the words that signify his condition in this moment of dying are connected to the heart and are the same in both the 1918 and the 1919 versions.

BAAL: My heart is jumping away. One. Two. Three. Four. *Whimpers suddenly loud.* I cannot. I don't want to. One suffocates here. (Schmidt, 1966, p. 75 and p. 148)

Given that, as previously mentioned, the 1922 version does not mention the heart problem at all, it is interesting that the 1919 version is recognised as being of the greatest literary value. Schmidt comments that the "Baal-material establishes its strongest poetic expression" here (1966, p. 204) and Hillesheim states that "in [Brecht-] research the 1919 version is valued as the most authentic and therefore has to be definitely consulted for an appropriate interpretation of the play, ..." (2005a, p. 254). Additionally, as will be seen when I discuss the 'Crisis of an emerging writer (1920)', in 1920 Brecht himself judges the changes he made to the 1919 version harshly.

It would be a dangerous simplification to conclude that the above evaluations of the 1919 version depend on the use of autobiographical material, especially about the heart. However, as I will discuss, Brecht's desperate wish to be published caused him to make changes to the 1919 version. These changes need to be critically analysed, if we want to understand his development as a playwright.

Evidence of autobiographical material

In 1919 Paula Banholzer, Brecht's first love (who would later become mother of his first child), describes the following experience when she spent the night at his family house. They didn't sleep in the same room, but in bedrooms next door to each other:

Suddenly I heard Brecht clearly and terrifyingly groaning. Frightened I jumped out of my bed and entered his room. Brecht lay in his bed with strong heart cramps and bathed in sweat. Fortunately I was wide-awake and also kept my head. Without asking him, I ran to the water tap, let the water run a while, so that it became colder and made him then compresses. The cramps slowed down quickly...We had spoken already earlier about his heart defect. But such an attack – this I had now experienced for the first time. (Banholzer cited in Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 23)

I refer to Paula Banholzer's description of Brecht's heart cramps because it proves that Brecht was still suffering from those symptoms in 1919. He was already documenting these in an almost poetic way in his diaries, especially in 1916. This suggests that the heart problem may have been incorporated directly onto the pages of *Baal* in 1918 and 1919.

Crisis of an emerging writer (1920)

It was the second draft of *Baal* in 1919 that was first submitted for publication, though Brecht was to realize that there was no publishing house that would print it (Schmidt, 1966, p. 2005). I have indicated how vitally important it was for Brecht to have his work published and it is no wonder that he made changes, if only to make the play less provocative. As already mentioned, Brecht himself believed that the 1919 version was the stronger one. He was not happy with the third version that he wrote at the end of 1919 and into the beginning of 1920. Between the 19th and 24th of July 1920, he wrote in his diaries, that he had "thoroughly messed up" *Baal* (GBA, vol. 26, p. 129):

He has become paper, academicised, slippery, shaved and with swimming trunks and so on. Instead of earthier, more carefree,

cheekier, simple ... Now I will make only fiery mud dumplings!
(GBA, vol. 26, p. 129)

However the “thoroughly messed up” version of *Baal* that he didn’t like went into print and officially became his first play. I believe that here Brecht was acting very pragmatically and that his career planning was designed for the long term.

Brecht’s anatomical metaphor regarding *Baal*

Brecht asked the writer Lion Feuchtwanger for feedback on the third version of *Baal* and received the frustrating reply that the text was much better read as a manuscript. He wrote on the 24th of August 1920: “That is right, it sucks. It should be ‘more similar’ to oneself. One should make it with intestines, heart and blood in it and lungs and let it run, with a kick!” (Schmidt, 1968, p. 98). Although Brecht appears to have given an almost central role to the heart in his metaphorical image of the anatomy of his writings, he has also placed it in context with other vital organs and life processes. I will examine this metaphor in detail in Chapter Four, and discuss in more depth the effects it has had on my research.

First published version of *Baal* (1922)

The 1922 version of *Baal* was the one that theatre audiences and critics knew, both at the time of its publication and for decades after. The other versions, written in 1918 and 1919 were only available to a select few, who had given Brecht their feedback. Although he might have been regretful about some changes he had made to the second draft of the 1919 version, he must undoubtedly have been pleased that his play had finally been published. It would take until the 1960s for the 1918, 1919 and 1926 versions to be published, and they are still only available to German readers.

Brecht’s difficulties with autobiographical material in *Baal*

When Brecht worked on the third version of *Baal*, he had more than one reason for making changes and not all of them had to do with

censorship. The 1919 version was much longer (29 scenes) than the 1922 version (22 scenes) and Brecht had obviously decided that he had to cut some text.

Brecht gave one more specific hint as to why he cut certain parts and this had to do with Johst's novel "The Lonely". After 1919 – as indicated in a letter to Hanns Johst from January/February 1920 – Brecht had "thrown out" all scenes in which Baal's mother had previously appeared. "In this way I banish the spectre of *The Lonely One* towards the periphery" (GBA, vol.1, p. 513). Nevertheless, Baal's words in his death scene – "Mother! Tell Ekart to go away... (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 60) – were kept in the 1922 and 1955 editions as a final reference to the importance the mother originally had in the play. I will deal later with the question of why Brecht kept certain scenes or parts and cut others. At this stage, I will simply underline the fact that he leaves out material that reminds himself and some people close to him about his personal heart problems.

Career planning and related strategic decisions were made on a conscious level so that Brecht could realise his ambition in the world. He was determined to become famous and from early on he made a decision to build a particular image of himself, one of an aloof, resilient rebel. Consequently, acknowledgment of a weak heart had no place in the text-body of his first play. This was not about the desire to be published and the fear of being rejected. It was a conscious decision to present himself to the public as the great Bertolt Brecht that he would become in the future. Hillesheim clearly acknowledges the loss of autobiographical elements in *Baal* when he compares the different versions. But he does not mention the fact that the 1922 version ignores the heart problem evident in the two earlier versions. For him it is more important to see the aesthetic choices of the author. The fact that Brecht changes and rearranges his material and also camouflages personal elements are presented as attributes of modern art for Hillesheim. However, in Hillesheim's opinion Brecht gives his reader a chance to recognize his artistic strategies. "His sources, predominantly his own life, watched closely they stay transparent, provable" (2005a, p. 256). In my 2008 publication, "'My heart jumps away,' Brecht's Baal dies," I hypothesise that in

the case of the heart, Brecht's camouflage technique is not used with the 'transparency' that Hillesheim sees in other cases – even if we watch closely. However I agree with his overall hypothesis, that Brecht's withdrawal of scenes and songs, which were obviously connected to his personal and his artistic life, is "proof for the existence of that autobiographical layer" in the play (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 255).

Version 1926 – new title, style and type of (auto)biography

In February 1926, Brecht staged a new version of *Baal* at Die Junge Bühne im Deutschen Theater in Berlin. The play had a new title: *Life Story of the Man Baal*, and was much shorter than the first published version of 1922, with only fourteen scenes. The style was also altered, with a clear progression away from lyricism. At the end of the twenties, Brecht described how in the performance of *Life Story of the Man Baal*, in a kind of prologue, "The actor playing Baal sang the song in front of big boards on which larger-than-life figures were depicted, who were harmed by him during the play. When those persons appeared in the play a V-effect was achieved" (Schmidt, 1968, p. 108). I will provide elucidation with regard to the subject of V-effect in Chapter Five.

In January 1926, in a journal entitled *Die Szene (The Scene)*, Brecht wrote a detailed description of a person whom he refers to as "a certain Josef K.", claiming that this man was the model for Baal: "The dramatic biography called *Baal* treats of the life of a man who really existed", Brecht states (Schmidt, 1968, p. 103). He goes on to describe the infamy and charm of the said Josef K., the "illegitimate son of a washerwoman" whose personality and behaviour do indeed match those of Baal (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 368). The question needs to be asked whether the detail with which Brecht describes Josef K. are mechanisms to deflect focus from the possible autobiographical inspiration for this play. Schmidt suspects that Brecht indeed "wants to avoid parallels being drawn between Baal's and his own life". He comments that Joseph K. is fictitious, "possibly an allusion to Kafka's 'Trial', published in 1925" (1968, pp. 159-60).

In fact the aspects from Brecht's life that he used to create *Baal* were numerous. According to Hillesheim, there was even a poet living at the time in Augsburg, with the last name Baal, who had many similarities with the main character of Brecht's first play (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 235):

... who then was the original model for the title's play: the deity known from the Old Testament[originally a god of fertility (sun, rain, wind) who later became demonised as "lord of the flies"].or[Johann Baal]the boozier from Augsburg? This can't be decided. (Hillesheim, p. 236)

Did Brecht steer away from autobiographical material to maintain the image of the invincible and slightly mysterious *enfant terrible*? Would this image have been harder to portray had his readers and audience known that he was struggling with a heart condition and a sometimes overwhelming fear of death?

Looking at the 1926 version of *Baal*, it is evident that any references to the heart problem were left out. This was a path that Brecht had already chosen for the 1922 version, but now he had radicalized his writing style further regarding the use of autobiographical material. In *Scene 1 Room with dining table* of the 1926 *Baal* version, the fact that Brecht had earlier won the Kleist prize is built into the text in an almost cunning way:

MÄCH *while Baal stands eating at the buffet*: ... I would like to think that my salon had been the first to welcome you, before the distinction of the Kleist Prize snatches you away from us. Will you have a glass of wine?" (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 380)

Hillesheim underlines how Brecht repeatedly points to himself in the Soiree scene. Baal has the same literary role models as Brecht (Verhaeren, Verlaine, Wedekind) and, in the 1926 version, Mäch says that the Kleist Prize, a prize that Brecht had won four years earlier, might snatch Baal away from Mäch's literature salon. An amusing detail for Hillesheim is the fact that the prize was given not only for *Drums in the Night* and *In the Jungle of Cities*, but also for *Baal* (Hillesheim, 2005a, page 252).

Brecht's *esprit* and charming cheekiness hid his vulnerability. He had no scruples about praising and promoting his own work in his writing. It is therefore apparent that the inclusion of autobiographical material in the 1926 version was not an issue for Brecht if it served to promote his image, rather than to demote it. Examining the written heart and the unwritten heart in *Baal* and *Journeys of the God of Happiness* became for me an increasingly complex exploration. The process enabled me to become aware of Brecht's literary techniques of hiding, camouflaging and masking which can sometimes be difficult to navigate, especially when it seems that Brecht is using the masks of his carefully built Brechtian image to continue to build that very image.

In fact it is important to use his own strategy of distancing, in order to see Brecht wearing a Brechtian mask. If this can be visualized, it is also easier to recognize when Brecht wears a Baal mask and vice versa. This image helped me in my work on the production of *The Happy Buddha*, in which I combined acting and puppetry. The physical positioning of an actor/puppeteer presenting a puppet reminded me of Brecht's literary masking/camouflaging technique. But with the puppets, I could go a step further into the physical dimensions of the text. The masking-through-writing process was a two-dimensional process and, as a theatre maker, I had the chance to bring this play of disguise into the three-dimensional space.

Last version 1955 – return to 1922 version with some changes

For the present edition of *Baal* the original version of the first and last scenes has been restored. Otherwise I have left the play, as it was, not having the strength to alter it. I admit (and warn): this play is lacking wisdom. (*GBA*, vol.1, p. 517)

In 1954, when Brecht was preparing a compilation of his works, he had to confront the embarrassing fact that his first play *Baal* was not compatible with his left wing ideology. This embarrassment hints at a wiser man looking back on the limited understanding of youth. *Baal* is more indicative of the young literary rebel than of the politically correct playwright who established himself on the socialist side of Germany after years in exile.

I will not ignore this side of him, but in order to connect with the essence of his work it is necessary, I believe, to look for the areas of tension between the wild man of youthfulness and the wise man of maturity.

Chapter 2

Journeys of the God of Happiness – without a heart

In this chapter I have incorporated aspects of an article I wrote for the German *Dreigroschenheft – Informations on Bertolt Brecht* (Räuker, 2009).

Brecht not only repeatedly reworked the original *Baal*; he also used its content to generate new material. In the spring of 1953, he recalls:

Twenty years after I wrote down *Baal*, a material (for an opera) moves me, that again has to do with the fundamental idea of *Baal*. There is a Chinese figure ... showing the little fat God of Happiness, who luxuriously stretches himself. (*GBA*, vol.10.2, p.1257)

The material became only a play fragment, with a number of songs with music by the composer Paul Dessau, dot points, comments, scene descriptions, titles and only two completed scenes. In one of the completed scenes, a winged messenger approaches the God of Happiness on his cloud in the sky to bring him news from earth; what the messenger has to say clearly displeases the once smiling deity.

MESSENGER:

Your temples now resemble dens of vice
A clang of coins instead of organ music everywhere
Whores visit and there's drunken cries
And opium smokers who just lie and stare
Your disciples' card skills are uncanny
They're stockbrokers and punters at the races
And so the search for joy of the many
Yields just a few fat and contented faces

GOD OF HAPPINESS:

But that's got nothing to do with me!
(*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 934)

The God of Happiness then decides to leave his cloud, notably already the lowest of clouds, to visit earth. Brecht summarises his journey as follows:

This God, arriving from the East ought to enter the cities destroyed after a great war and attempt to move the people to fight for their personal happiness and wellbeing. Having assembled a diverse group of disciples he draws the wrath of the authorities when some of them begin to spread the idea that the farmers should own their land, that the workers should take over the factories and that the workers' and farmers' children should capture the schools. He is arrested and sentenced to death. And now the executioners try their hand at dealing with this little God of Happiness. But he finds the poisons that they give him delicious; his head, having been chopped off, swiftly grows back; dangling from the gallows he performs an infectious merry dance; and so on. *It is impossible to entirely kill the human urge for happiness.* (GBA, vol. 23, 1993, p. 241)

In a conversation with the collaborating composer Paul Dessau in 1950, Brecht declared that: "I think I now have the ending for our *God of Happiness*: Happiness cannot be killed... Happiness is: Communism" (GBA, vol.10.2, p. 1258). In the fragment, however, the God of Happiness does not hit upon this overly simplistic or ingeniously naive formula for happiness by himself. He has to be pushed into the right way of thinking. Brecht writes in the play fragment *Journeys of the God of Happiness*:

The God of Happiness has no morality. He teaches only that people should do everything to be happy. How they should attain this happiness, he does not know. His pupils include robbers, whores, and tyrants alike. (GBA, vol.10.2, p. 926)

But then some of his followers:

organize a new form of fight for happiness. The farmer needs soil, but also the collaboration of all farmers, the workers, the factory and [all the strategies of] planning etc. As the highest form of happiness, productivity is mentioned. (GBA, vol.10.2, p. 926)

Without a heart

My interest in *Journeys of the God of Happiness* was first of all sparked by Brecht's comment that the play fragment had to do with the same

fundamental idea as *Baal*. He formulated this idea and highlighted it by writing it in italics: "*It is impossible to entirely kill the human urge for happiness.*"

Upon studying *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, I realized that the entire fragment does not mention the word 'heart' once. When Brecht started to work on *Baal* he did not deny that the human urge for happiness had to do with the human heart. He used the heart as a symbol and metaphor for emotions and of course he saw that happiness is essentially an emotion. But the heart was neither for Baal nor for Brecht a reliable source of happiness. I propose that Brecht therefore felt compelled to remove firstly the heart problem and later the word 'heart' from the play text. Libido and other 'appetites' became more prominent, as drives for seeking pleasure, the (almost) equivalent substitute for happiness.

The Marxist Brecht wrote in the 1940s regarding *Journeys of the God of Happiness*: "As the highest form of happiness productivity is mentioned." This had little to do with the fundamental idea behind *Baal* where the main character did not display much of a work ethic at all. Productivity is only an issue for Baal when he suffers from a heart attack in the attic scene (1918, 1919 versions). He argues with God, that he has not yet produced enough acts for his current play and therefore he refuses to die. It is my argument that the reasons for an exclusion of the heart from *Journeys of the God of Happiness* go back to the genesis of *Baal*. The fundamental idea that connects both plays is indeed that the human urge for happiness can never be entirely expunged. In Baal's panic that his heart problems might cause him to die before he has finished writing his manuscript, it is possible to conclude that in writing *Baal*, Brecht was appealing to himself to not die before he had become immortal through his work. Because he did not believe in an afterlife, it was essential for him to make full use of his lifetime on earth:

I wish all things to be handed over to *me* ... and my grounds for this demand are, that I exist only *once*. (Brecht 1919/20 in *GBA*, vol. 26, p.118)

Later in his life Brecht created an immortal God of Happiness who had no heart at all. I argue that in doing so Brecht was distancing himself from his own weak heart, in an attempt to achieve mastery over it.

In Brecht's *Journeys of the God of Happiness* fragment he used what I would like to call the 'ultimate mask' for his heart problem – the God of Happiness had no heart at all. I contend that it was in writing *Baal* that Brecht developed the technique of masking and it was the camouflaging/masking of his heart-problem that was the central issue. By using the 'ultimate mask' for his heart problem in his *Journeys* fragments, Brecht removed this autobiographical aspect from his work about "the human urge for happiness".

Therefore I could not continue my *Baal* research regarding camouflaging when looking at the *Journeys* fragment. I had to find a radically different angle.

Research question:

A question arose: "Can I implant 'the heart' into the fragment *Journeys of the God of Happiness* (in the form of an adaptation) and is this the right text in which to try this 'implantation'?" This was the research question for the creative component of my doctoral studies. The process and the outcomes of my practical theatre work on *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* are described, discussed and evaluated in Chapter Eight.

Brecht never made a secret of the antipathy that he felt towards the sentimental, romantic (heartache) type of literature against which he had always rebelled. Nevertheless, the literature of this now celebrated great German dramatist could not afford to completely omit any mention of the heart, being as it was, the "joker of German language, of German poets"(Hollmer, 1997, p.196). This applies also, or perhaps particularly to Brecht the socialist, for it is well known that, for socialists, the human heart beats 'on the left'. As stated in his poem "Song about Happiness", 1951:

So let your hands work busily
Put your heart into it
As happiness must be earned

It won't just come on its own. (GBA, vol.15, p. 256)

This is a direct link to the God of Happiness and his pupils: "They know new paths to happiness, organise a new type of struggle for happiness" (GBA, vol.10.2, p. 926). In my adaptation of Brecht's play fragment, I combined the above poetic appeal to commit whole-heartedly to the building of a happier world, with the idea of "a new type of struggle for happiness." I initially introduced the heart into my adaption of Brecht's play/opera libretto fragment through one of the followers of the Happy Buddha, whose path to happiness aimed at 'a golden heart' (see Chapter Eight).

As previously quoted, Brecht clearly describes the resilience of the God of Happiness in the execution scene (GBA, vol. 10.2, p. 1258). This scene was meant to represent the notion of the immortal desire for happiness. For me the execution scene was also one of the main reasons why a staging of *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* had been deemed possible, and even attractive, in the context of a puppetry festival.

The God of Happiness is the Happy Buddha

In the translation of Brecht's play fragment the title alone was a cause of significant debate; had the term "Glücksgott" been translated literally, the piece should have been entitled *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. The Eastern paragon of deified happiness that Brecht was referring to in this piece is, however, better known as the "Happy Buddha" in the English language.

The adoption of the term, the Happy Buddha, clearly introduced a range of possible specific associations. I did not think that its inclusion in the title of my production would lead to a common misinterpretation that the piece would be a treatise concerning the precepts of Buddhism. These days, the Happy Buddha rubs shoulders with pointy-hatted gnomes in garden supply centres from Augsburg to Australia, with a multitude of Asian restaurants carrying his name. The statue, as a lucky charm for happiness and prosperity has gained near universal recognition and affection driven by

the forces of globalisation. The choice of the title, *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*, therefore seemed entirely justified and in keeping with Brecht's understanding of the statuette he discovered in New York.

It may also be of relevance that the Happy Buddha image itself is thought to have originated with a monk who lived in Fenghua, China during the 10th century AD. Today the Happy Buddha is worshipped as a bodhisattva with limitless compassion, a quality of character that is shown by an actual big stomach. The couplet usually dedicated to this Buddha in a temple reads: "His belly is big enough to contain all intolerable things in the world; his mouth is ever ready to laugh at all snobbish persons under heaven." Usually it is the heart, which stands for compassion (in East and West). The image of a big belly is rarely used in this context.

Brecht did not mention compassion as a particular quality of his 'God of Happiness'. On the contrary, in the play fragment it seems that compassion is a human quality that the God has little interest in. It is unclear if Brecht knew about the symbolism of the big belly. For him, the image of the 'little fat God of Happiness' who smiles, even when the executioners try to kill him, is more connected to a kind of invincibility: the human urge for happiness cannot be entirely killed. This urge acquires a political superstructure in Brecht's writings. One could say that the feeling of compassion is substituted by the concept of solidarity⁶ and class-consciousness. But at first the God of Happiness has a very simple message: do what gives you pleasure. The big belly and the big smile are interpreted as symbols for earthly pleasures and not at all as a capacity for compassion.

⁶ Brecht's "Solidarity Song" - an excerpt translated by John Willett: "(Verse:) Peoples of the world together / Join to serve the common cause! / So it feeds us all forever / See to it that it's now yours. / (Refrain:) Forward without forgetting / Where our strength can be seen now to be! / When starving or when eating / Forward not forgetting / Our solidarity ...

Brecht, the Happy Buddha and Asia

Brecht's fascination with Asian art and philosophy could be a doctoral subject on its own. A book by Anthony Tatlow,⁷ *Brecht's East Asia* gives an unconventional insight into this rich area of research. I will focus on one aspect of this subject that has significance for my concern with ideas expressed in the play fragment, *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. Brecht claimed that his original inspiration here was a wooden figure of the Happy Buddha "luxuriously stretching himself" (*GBA*, vol.10.2, p.1258). The fact that, as mentioned above, the sculpture was Brecht's original inspiration for *Journeys of the God of Happiness* is also why I considered the title *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* to be the right title for my adaptation of the fragment.

Happy Buddha sculpture and its physical appearance

Brecht describes the Happy Buddha as "the fat little God of happiness" (*GBA*, vol.10.2, p.1258). This is not at all a condemnation of an overweight deity but instead a fascination with the figure's physical appearance. He wrote in his journal in 1927:

I don't sit comfortable on my bum: it is too skinny ... My appetite is too weak. I am immediately full!!" (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 289)

Towards the end of the 1920s, he was even more explicit about what his role models were:

I fancied big appetites. It seemed to me a natural advantage, if people could eat lots and with enjoyment, overall wished for lots, could get lots out of things and so forth. With me, I disliked my small appetite ... The question therefore was: How should I get big and steady appetites? (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 292)

Seeing the sculpture of the Happy Buddha must have impressed Brecht, especially the round belly and the corresponding big smile on his round cheeks. In 1941, Brecht was not as thin as he was in 1927 and sitting on his 'bum' in front of his typewriter was probably more comfortable. However, his fascination with 'big and steady appetites' was still there and,

⁷ Anthony Tatlow's book is a visual essay that accompanied an exhibition entitled *Brecht's Ost Asien*, in Berlin in 1998.

as before with *Baal*, it had to become part of his writings. There is something present in the appearance of the God of Happiness, that Brecht projects onto the dramaturgical grid of the play. Brecht the author enjoys the big appetites vicariously, through his play's character. This is again similar to what he did with Baal, who he described as having "immortal intestines" and who "could eat broad pastures down to stubble." With *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, Brecht integrates his very personal fascination with "big appetites" into his political concept, something that caused him enormous difficulties in the case of *Baal*. Together with his growing political awareness, Brecht develops the image of himself as a teacher and, for example, uses the God of Happiness to deliver his message in a song:

In front of me the cannons ride
Behind me truckloads full of loot
But loud stomach rumbling shows me
That even here still people live.

And as long as stomachs rumble
Admirers are there for me
And from where he goes, the teacher
The first muttering can be heard. (GBA, vol. 10.2, p. 930)

However, an understanding for this form of materialism is just a first step. Those who are hungry and seek happiness have to collectively understand the following comments made by Brecht, as described in section A 8 of the play fragment:

The God of Happiness tries to make individuals happy, i.e. to attract new disciples. Felony is the outcome. All Happiness comes at the expense of the misfortune of others. (GBA, vol. 10.2, p. 926)

The continuation of Brecht's comment describes that only now the God of Happiness understands who "his true followers" are (from section A 8 of the play fragment):

Then he receives proposals from the rich. He shall only work for them now.

The poor, on the other hand, always want Happiness for everyone.

Thus they constitute his true followers. (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 926)

The realization comes at the table [from section A 3 of the play fragment]:

Invited by the rich. They cannot enjoy anything. He whines about the wastefulness. Goes into the kitchen. He becomes illegal, pursued, hidden. (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 924)

For the politicised Brecht the question is not only “How should I get big and steady appetites?” (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 292). The appetite of a whole suppressed class of people becomes his concern. He saw that their hunger for nourishment and happiness could be used as a political force, if translated into a hunger for change. This was the common leftwing belief in the power of the working class; that they have the guts to take action and to fight for change. This can be seen as a transformation of Baal’s appetite for his egotistical life, transferred in Brecht’s later work to an appetite for justice for the masses:

Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral. (*GBA*, vol. 2, p. 284)

(This famous line from Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera* can be translated as: When you have a full stomach, then you can think about morals.)

The Happy Buddha’s stretching action

Brecht’s remark about the statue of the God of Happiness being fat was followed by an observation of its stretching action. In describing how the Happy Buddha stretches, Brecht uses the German word *wohlig*, which means luxuriously. Instead of ‘luxuriously’, previous translators have used the word ‘contentedly’ for the German word ‘wohlig’. This describes the peacefulness in the moment of the stretch, but not so much how physically pleasurable and sensual a stretching action can feel. Yet it was not only from a hedonistic perspective that Brecht found value in sensuality. There is no doubt that he was interested in this subject as a theatre artist. Regarding physical training for actors, Brecht stated, “a training in sensuousness is

needed. To train the body as an instrument is not harmless, it ought not only be the object, it must also be the subject of the art" (*GBA*, vol. 22.2. p. 615). This subject will be further explored in Chapter Seven.

It is evident that Brecht had no interest in the subject of purely sportive physical exercise. When his daughter Barbara Brecht-Schall heard about plans for a book "Brecht and Sport", she wrote to the author: "I have to say, I find the whole idea very amusing, particularly, since my father has avoided doing sports in person like the plague his whole life long" (Witt, 1996, p. 200). However, the following quotation by Brecht himself tells us clearly that physical comfort was of concern to him:

According to my memory, I've never written a line if I didn't feel well, physically. This well-being alone gives the sovereignty that is necessary for writing. It has to be writing from above to below, one has to sit over a theme. Although, vice-versa such a state of well-being more or less arises, when I sit down at the table with my typewriter. (*GBA*, vol. 27, p. 340)

For Brecht the stretch of the Happy Buddha seems to be an expression of pure joy. He does not seem to be aware of or interested in the concept that systemized stretching can enhance one's physical health. In the play fragment, there is another adverb used to describe the manner in which the God of Happiness stretches. In this instance Brecht uses the word *wollüstig*, which translated directly means lustful, but for the sake of translation of the verse, takes on the adverb form:

And no self-respecting little parson
Ever recommended me to his customers
Whoever only so much as stretches lasciviously
Is immediately sent to confession. (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 928)

Here the image of the stretch is used as a continuation of the God of Happiness' association with sexual pleasure. Additionally, Brecht is also using it to distance this god from the Christian God, or at least from the Christian religion, with its body-negation and demonising of lust. Brecht leaves us with just these two remarks on the rich subject of stretching.

Brecht's down to earth concept of happiness

The example that I will use now to discuss the down to earth concept of happiness in *Journeys of the God of Happiness* shows how Brecht examines class-affiliation through the use of an anatomical metaphor. In the *Seventh Song Of The God Of Happiness* the last verse reads:

I am the God of lowness
The palate and the testicles
Because happiness lies, well, I'm sorry
Considerably close to the ground. (GBA, vol. 10.2, p. 929)

In German testicles/*Hoden* and ground/*Boden* rhyme and by using this rhyme Brecht suggests a connection between libido and the grounded nature of a pragmatic, realistic, 'earthy' approach to life.

In the preceding verse, he accuses society of forcing a restrictive moral code, which suppresses corporal human impulses and advocates that individuals look for happiness in the distance, far away from earthly pleasures:

A smile alone can be obnoxious
Laughter is always suspicious
Whoever does not reach for the stars, is a pig
Whoever laughs at that, is vile. (GBA, vol. 10.2, p. 929)

Brecht used the Happy Buddha for his own purposes

In the statue of the God of Happiness, Brecht found a symbol for the human urge for happiness. He talks about a god who travels the continent (most likely Europe) after a big war and that this god arrives from the east. He calls him the God of Happiness and not the Happy Buddha and the only reminders of the wooden figure he bought in New York's China Town is that his god is also fat, that it stretches lustfully and that it comes from the east. Besides these connections, it is very hard to see the Asian origin of his initial inspiration for the play. The first impression is that he simply used another, more suitable character than Baal to develop a play on the human urge for

happiness on a communal scale. Brecht wanted the play fragment to become a repertoire-play, as he later stated, something with a universal theme, which could be performed at any time (9 November 1949, *GBA*, vol. 27, p. 307, 1995).

It is worth considering whether the image of a teacher (the God of Happiness) arriving after a long journey from the east implies a connection to the 1917 Russian Revolution and to the development of communism in China. In particular it may be a reference to Mao Tse-Tung's rise to power and capacity to change the conditions of the masses, after leading the Red Army on the Long March of 1934-35. Any implications of the east are therefore most likely meant only insofar as they inspire and inform the play fragment's revolutionary message.

According to Tatlow: "At first glance Brecht's relationship with Buddhism may appear scarcely a promising theme" (Tatlow, 1998, p. 38). However at an early age he had already read a book about Buddha, as documented in his journals of 1921: "I read Mauthner's 'Last Death of Gautama Buddha'. An excellent book" (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 227).

Brecht did not appear to be particularly interested in Buddhism, although he was intrigued and encouraged by the Buddha's pragmatic methods towards creating change.⁸ This can be observed in Brecht's poem "The Silence of the Buddha", in which the Buddha states:

To whom the ground is not so hot that he would rather
Exchange it with any other instead of staying,
I have nothing to say. (*GBA*, vol.12, p. 36)

Brecht concludes that the movement that he represents has "not much to say" to those who ask "what will happen to their piggy bank and Sunday pants after a revolution" (Tatlow, 1998, p. 37).

⁸ Another Eastern philosophy in which Brecht was interested was Taoism. He read the Tao Te King by Lao-tse and declared his deep affinity with the ideas presented in the text. In 1920 he wrote in his diary: "...[Warschauer] shows me Lao-tse and he [Lao-tse] is so much in agreement with me that he [Warschauer] is continually amazed." (*GBA*, vol 26, p.168)

The *God of Happiness* and *Baal* – the same fundamental idea

The theme of immortality is a strong link between the *God of Happiness* and *Baal* (with its “immortal intestines”) as is, of course, the human urge for happiness. On September 11th 1938, Brecht wrote about *Baal*:

it was always a torso, he was then still operated on a few times, for the (2) book-publications and the performance. The sense got almost lost with it His “Do what gives you pleasure!” would give a lot, treated right. I wonder, if I should take the time. (Schmidt, 1968, p. 109)

Baal’s radical “Do what gives you pleasure!” is the life force that perhaps could transform the play ‘torso’ into a powerful body of text, if “treated right”, as the now unwaveringly leftwing Brecht wrote in 1938. To me the image of the ‘torso’ is an indication of how important physical metaphors still were in his development as a playwright. This had been especially true when he went through a crisis in working on his first play. “It [the *Baal* manuscript] should be ‘more similar’ to oneself! One should make it with intestines, heart and blood in it and lungs and let it run, with a kick!” (Schmidt, 1968, p. 98). The connection between this early physical metaphor and the image of the *Baal* torso eighteen years later is remarkable.

***Bad Baal the Antisocial Man* and the God of Happiness**

In the same context as the above 1938 quotation, Brecht mentions his work on the *Lehrstücke* (*Learning Plays*) about *Bad Baal the Antisocial Man*. He had written a fragmentary typescript, most likely around 1929/30 and contemplates the question whether it would be worthwhile to invest more time into developing this raw material:

There are no direct indications for the dating of the fragment *Bad Baal the Antisocial Man*. It is known though, that at the end of the twenties and beginning of the thirties Brecht was preoccupied with illustrating Marxist experiences and doctrines in plays. (Schmidt, 1968, p. 148)

The fragmentary typescript of *Bad Baal the Antisocial Man* had very little to do with the original *Baal* (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 372). Therefore I did not pay much attention to it in the first chapter of my exegesis, in which I compared the different versions of the play. However, the fundamental idea that connects *Baal* and *Journeys of the God of Happiness* can also be found in *Bad Baal the Antisocial Man*: “Do what gives you pleasure!” (Schmidt, 1968). Eventually, though, Brecht abandoned the writing of this particular *Lehrstück*. Besides, the latter two references have in common a focus on the “human urge for happiness” from a Marxist point of view:

Today I finally realized why I never managed to turn out those little *Lehrstücke* about the adventures of ‘Bad Baal the Antisocial Man’. Antisocial people aren’t important. The really antisocial people are the owners of the means of production and other sources of life, and they are only antisocial as such. There are also their helpers and their helpers’ helpers, of course, but again only as such. It is *the* gospel of humanity’s enemies that there are such things as antisocial instincts, antisocial personalities and so on. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 374)

Following the above insights in March 1939, Brecht gave up on “those little *Lehrstücke* about the adventures of *Bad Baal the Antisocial Man*.” A year later the plans for *Journeys of the God of Happiness* would revive his interest in writing a play about the ‘human urge for happiness’ from a Marxist point of view. The realisation, that socialism is a matter of productivity became a topic in the new material: “As the highest form of happiness productivity is mentioned” (*GBA*, vol.10.2, p. 926). But the first impression the reader could get about the God of Happiness is through an Antisocial God. Brecht says about him:

[He] has no morals. He teaches only that people should do everything to be happy. How they should attain this happiness is beyond his grasp. His pupils include robbers, whores, and tyrants alike. (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 926)

“Do what gives you pleasure!” – The human drive that Brecht deals with in *Baal*, *Bad Baal the Antisocial Man* and *Journeys of the God of Happiness* could be described as a primal force, a basic life energy that operates before concepts of morality modify behaviour. In the case of *Baal*, we could also say it is very much about male libido in an aggressive form.

The roles of men and women in Brecht's plays are often characterized by the struggle between the aggressive male libido and the female desire to nurture and be nurtured, in other words to bond and commit. After Baal and Johanna have had sex and he has taken her virginity, their conversation demonstrates this polarity:

BAAL: I like the smell. – What about another helping? What's gone is gone.

JOHANNA: Do you still love me? Say it. *Baal whistles*. Can't you say it?

BAAL *looking up at the ceiling*: I'm fed to the teeth! (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 18)

When Johanna's boyfriend, Johannes introduces her to Baal earlier in the play, the bohemian poet remarks:

BAAL: You've a good heart, Johanna. You'll never be unfaithful, will you? (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p.13)

Baal tells Johanna that she has a good heart, but for him all women get "weak knees" in the end. For Baal the sexual drive is the strongest force in life and he believes that this counts for both men and women. But he does not want to know much about the emotional side of relationships. This annoying consequence of the sexual act seems like a female construction fault to him. Through the eyes of a woman, the male construction fault looks like the opposite:

EMILY: You don't even have a hole where others have a heart. (*GBA*, vol.1, p. 163)

The *God of Happiness* and *Baal* – Brecht and Freud

I argue that the time during which *Baal* was written was a period in Brecht's life when he was experiencing a dramatic battle not only between life and death but also between sexuality, emotionality and morality. With his play "the young Brecht makes a first extensive attempt to renounce the traditional moral code" (Vaßen, 1994, p. 53). One could say that in psychological terms *Baal* was a bid to rescue himself, from unbearable inner tensions, through writing. But the play's amoral tone did not provide the

solution or the model for how to live a happy life, if one is to live with others. As described in the introduction, Brecht was never attracted to the idea of a hermetic existence. Later, when he became the teacher, the writer with a didactic socialist mission, *Baal* started to become a source of embarrassment. It is possible that the conflict between an individual's urges for pleasure, in particular those of a sexual nature, and the shared responsibility for the collective's happiness was at least part of the source of this embarrassment.

With *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, he suggested that our urges for pleasure should be made productive, not in an individual sense, but collectively. Also in such a political context, sexuality is of great importance to Brecht. It is appropriate here to consider Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*Civilization and its Discontents*) and whether Brecht was trying to find his socialist answer to this text. "Brecht read it already in 1930, the year of its publication" (Anz, 1998, p. 51). Freud mentions the cultural achievement of regulating rivers to avoid flooding and building canals in order to distribute water to where it is needed. "From around 1930 onwards one encounters frequent images of flooding and dam construction, regulating and irrigation, as examples of the human mastery of nature in Brecht's work" (Anz, 1998, p. 51). Of course this could also be seen as a metaphor for the restriction and channeling of sexual desire and other primal urges.

While Freud emphasises the restriction of desires as a prerequisite for cultural work, Brecht wants a socialist realism in theatre that creates "pleasure in the possibility of the mastery of human destiny through society" (GBA, vol. 23, p. 286). Brecht respected Freud and was obviously inspired by his theories even though he maintained quite a critical position towards psychoanalysis and saw it as a "symptomatic manifestation of the bourgeois ideology" (Anz, 1998, p. 52). It is true though, that he criticises not so much the theory but the commercialisation of its practice and the fact that it focuses on the individual, rather than on the social and economic situation of the collective.

Chapter 3

Baal's Anatomy – Was Baal Brecht's fantasy-body?

On the 31st of May 1918, Brecht wrote in a letter to Caspar Neher:

Dear Cas,

.... I'm well and take all pains, to be happy. It is not so easy. Anyway, I'm on some kind of a high though: I'm writing a comedy: "Baal eats! Baal dances!! Baal is transfigured!!!" There is a hamster in it, an outrageous hedonist, who leaves grease spots on the sky, a May-mad chap with immortal intestines! Your Bert Br. (*GBA*, vol. 28, p. 56)

This resonates with a note in his 'autobiographical notes', written at the end of the 1920s that I have used in the previous chapter to explain his fascination for the 'fat' God of Happiness:

I fancied big appetites. It seemed to me a natural advantage, if people could eat lots and with enjoyment, generally wished for lots, could get lots out of things and so forth. With me, I disliked my low appetite. (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 292)

In the light of the combination of the above two comments, both *Baal* and the *God of Happiness* can be seen as Brecht's projection screens for explorations of 'big appetites'. However there is a difference between the two in that in the creation of *Baal*, Brecht was not projecting onto the character from a safe distance. By the time he was writing *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, he had already developed his detached literary style, whereas with *Baal* (1918 and 1919 versions), the author appears to have wanted to become involved, to be very close and even to merge with his fiction.

During this time Brecht's friend Neher, who would become one of his most important design collaborators in theatre, made a drawing of Baal and gave it to Brecht as a present. Physically, the young author and the representation of the main character in his first play seemed to have nothing in common. There is an intriguing detail though, which makes it likely that Neher knew how much Brecht wanted to see himself in this portrait, albeit

with a different body. Hillesheim points out the fact that Baal is holding a guitar in this depiction in the same particular idiosyncratic way that Brecht used to hold his guitar. This gives us an idea as to how much fiction and autobiography were interwoven in his first play (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 247).

Caspar Neher's portrait of Baal on Brecht's attic ceiling

The portrait of Baal was pinned to Brecht's attic ceiling and it is quite revealing that it was hanging right above his bed. Two obvious similarities between Brecht and Baal were that the author and his fictional character both lived in attics and both were writers. The physical space to create, to meet friends, to make love and to sleep was, for both, directly under a rooftop. In contrast, physically they were the complete antithesis of each other. To understand what Brecht's objective was here, we have to go back to his "low appetite": "The question therefore was: How should I get big and steady appetites?" (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 292). The answer to his question appears to emerge in Brecht's creation of larger than life characters, with larger than life appetites and bodies and enough strength to get what they (both the character and Brecht) lusted for. However this strategy of identification with a character was not employed merely to vicariously experience "big and steady appetites". It was also a tool for Brecht's development as a writer, to enable him to create characters that seemed to live and breathe on the page.

It is possible that Brecht was not yet experienced enough as a writer to bring a character like that of Baal directly onto the page. Perhaps he was still at a point, quite understandably, where he actually could not write if he did not 'get into' his character, get him under his skin and almost merge with him in a psychophysical fantasy-body. The following anecdote makes that idea perfectly plausible.

Self-hypnosis and a cycle of mirrors

Brecht's father was in the habit of occasionally asking one of his secretaries to typewrite the latest version of *Baal* for his son. One of these women was in Brecht's attic one day, waiting for instructions. Observing the

bohemian ambience, she saw the portrait of Baal above Brecht's bed and asked what it was about. She didn't admit it to Brecht, but she found this character right above his bed quite disturbing. Why would he want to look at this gruesome picture first thing in the morning and last thing at night?

Brecht's response to this question was interesting, when contextualised with his later development as a writer and his perspectives on theatre and acting. "Brecht ... said, that with the Baal-image he hypnotised himself for the work" (Frisch, 1976, p. 194). Therefore one could say that it was a form of self-hypnosis enabling him to create the character depicted by the drawing.

Later in life, Brecht emphatically rejected the use of what he called hypnosis in the performing arts. He used the term to describe a type of theatre that drew the audience into psychological identification with characters and he criticised a similar immersion technique used by actors: "For the contemporary amateur theatre ... the liberation from the constraint to practice hypnosis, becomes noticeable in a particularly favourable way" (*GBA*, vol. 22.1, p. 556). Ironically, at the beginning of his playwriting career, Brecht himself used a form of hypnosis to achieve the creation of Baal, deliberately hallucinating about this massive animal-like man with his aggressive demeanour.

"You are so ugly, so ugly, it's frightening."

In the opening scene, Dining Room, Mr. Mech says to Baal:

MECH: You've got the same shaped head as a man in the Malayan Archipelago, who used to have himself driven to work with a whip. If he wasn't grinding his teeth he couldn't work. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 5)

What might the head of a man look like who constantly grinds his teeth while he works? Sophie Barger's comment in the scene after Baal had picked her up from the street and brought her back to his attic is very clear:

SOPHIE: You are so ugly, so ugly, it's frightening. – But then – (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 24)

However ugly the shape of Baal's head may be conceived to be, that head bears something that fascinates observers, and not only women. Johannes clumsily expresses his male admiration when Baal tells him at the inn that he expects Emilie, Mech's wife, to join him soon:

JOHANNES: I can understand that you are winning a man's love, but how can you have any success with women. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 12)

Baal's body, in particular his head is obtrusive. It is frightening, a quality that is again opposite to what his creator's physiognomy tells the world around him. Brecht's features were narrow and thin and even in his twenties he had a boyish look, with intelligent and wide-awake eyes. However, Baal does not come across as somebody without a brain. I would even argue that he has a number of intelligences working throughout his whole body. His head is just another part of that ancient human animal which he represents for Brecht. "Like all wild animals he is serious", he writes in the prologue of the 1918 version (Willett and Manheim, 199, p. 367).

Baal – a form of “Übermensch”

Hillesheim underlines the connections with Nietzsche's Zarathustra and sees Baal's vitality "on the other side of good and evil" (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 234-35). To live outside the moral categories of a bourgeois society was Brecht's vision at the time; a risky and demanding life. One would need a strong vehicle for that, something like Nietzsche's "Übermensch". Brecht needed a fantasy body, not to look good in a conventional sense, but to have the strength for a major creative breakthrough. To become a great writer he had to revolt against state, religion and family. And revolt he did. He was not behaving cowardly by hiding behind Baal. On the contrary, he was using the character to explore the wild man within himself.

Brecht's appearance was often ungroomed and people saw him as an eccentric. "He was obviously keen to come across as much as possible as incorrect ..." (Frisch, 1976, p. 194). One night around 1918/19 Brecht, Neher,

Pflanzelt and other friends ended up in a pub in Augsburg where a prostitute was singing, standing on a table. They all sang the refrain enthusiastically: "My belly has a tuft of hair, I think I am an ape." Then Brecht took the guitar and sang Goethe's *Der Gott und die Bajadere*:

with his exciting, cawing voice and the unusual rhythm. ... When he had ended, a storm of applause broke over Brecht, spontaneously a man took his hat and collected money for the singer, everybody stormed onto Brecht and he had to repeat his performance". (Frisch, 1976, p. 157)

This is remarkably similar to the reception that Baal receives when he spontaneously sings *Orge's song* at the inn:

DRIVERS *clapping*: Bravo! ... A good song! Give the gentleman a cherry brandy.... What a man! (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 14)

Masks and fantasies

Brecht's literary camouflaging technique allowed him to integrate personal material, which he did not wish to be recognized by the reader, into his writing. Perhaps those who were very close to him, personally and artistically, would have grasped certain connections between Brecht's life and his work. But it is unlikely that this was Brecht's main goal. If we look at camouflaging as a game of hide and seek, as I suggest, it is predominantly a game the author Brecht plays with himself.

In *Baal*, Brecht created literary 'masks' to manipulate and to generate encouragement for his writing. Baal's obtrusive physical appearance gave a strong message, because it was frightening and even diabolical. One could say that an author who was able to create such a character gives the impression that he has mastered those attributes. But Brecht was a complex and contradictory man. He did not fulfil simplistic expectations that he, the author of *Baal*, is Baal or appears like him. The critic Hans Natonek wrote on the 10th December 1923 after *Baal* premiered in Leipzig:

Amidst battle sounds of whistling, booing, and the applause, an intimidated, pale, slim lad, the poet Bertolt Brecht, appeared and immediately huddled hastily in the wings and came out again fearfully, on the theatre-director's hand. The expression on his face: Oh my God, what have I done... Actually I would have

thought that the writer of a “Baal” would present his manly chest defiantly to the storm of indignation. But poets are always different from the way one imagines them. (Schmidt, 1968, p. 175)

In the end, Baal was not the devil. But he represented the part of human nature of which bourgeois society was most fearful. On the other hand, one could be sure to get applause from like-minded people. Brecht could feel the rebellious vitality of Baal’s fictional body in his own, even though his own body was nothing like Baal’s. Clearly he did lend his life force to the play’s character. What he got out of this transaction was more than a play text. Brecht’s early writing experience on *Baal* can be considered cathartic – through it he was able to let his hunger for life take supremacy over his fear of death.

BAAL: Dying? I don’t let myself be talked into it. I fight it with a knife ... I don’t believe in an afterlife and depend on this life. (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 55)

It is possible that Brecht needed Baal as a fantasy body to go into the battle of writing about a major conflict in his young life. He was not at all ready to surrender to the forces that threatened his health and his heart. Writing about Baal was not enough to become strong. A physical identification with the character was needed. Was Baal’s death then Brecht’s sacrificial offering? Did the character have to die so that the author could live? It is possible that in the act of writing the death by heart attack of his fantasy body, Brecht was able to process and deal with some of his anxieties concerning his own heart problems. The death of a fantasy body still might have hurt, but it was not the end of the author’s life. The next chapter will examine how Brecht aimed to create living entities of his plays.

BAAL ... I flee from death into life... (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 54)

Chapter 4

The 1920 anatomical metaphor for the ideal play

It [the *Baal* manuscript] should be 'more similar' to oneself! One should make it with intestines, heart and blood in it and lungs and let it run, with a kick! (Schmidt, 1968, p. 98)

It is probable that Brecht's unruly and excessively long second version [of *Baal* in 1919], although artistically the strongest, found little favour with publishers and theatre directors, and [Brecht] found himself therefore forced to produce a watered-down and shortened form of the play. (Schmidt, 1968, p. 119)

In Chapter One of this exegesis, I discussed how in 1920, Brecht was quite unhappy with this revised version of *Baal* that he had written for publication, following his publisher's instructions. In expressing his frustration, he used the above metaphor for his literary work that applied to *Baal* as he wished it to be and also how he wished his future playwriting would be. I will now examine this metaphor in detail.

Analysing Brecht's anatomical metaphor regarding *Baal*:

"... with intestines, heart and blood in it and lungs and let it run, with a kick!"

"intestines"

From his 1918 letter to Neher, we know that Brecht saw Baal as somebody with "immortal intestines", so it is no wonder that he mentions the bowels first in his metaphor. Brecht's previously discussed fascination for 'big appetites' is important for an understanding as to why he gives digestion such focus. A character that "can graze broad pastures down to stubble" needs 'immortal intestines'. I discussed the anatomy of the character Baal in the previous chapter. Now I would like to question what the metaphorical 'intestines' meant for Brecht in regards to the overall structure or anatomy of a play.

A play with intestines might have meant for Brecht that the writing should have vitality and courage. It should be rebellious and anti-bourgeois.

BAAL: *leaning on the table*: It's all a bloody circus. Did you feel it?
Did it get under your skin? You have to lure the beast from its cage!
Get the beast into the sun! My bill! Let love see the light of the day!
Naked in the sunshine! Under a clear sky! (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p.17)

Brecht uses Baal to radically oppose any form of bourgeois literature, which tries to deny the fact that human life involved things such as digestion, excrement, or anything that could sound 'unclean'. In this sense, the whole lower body including the sexual organs was new ground to explore for an artist such as Brecht. In the first quotation at the beginning of this chapter, it is evident that the qualities he was most interested in for his writing at this stage were vitality, courage, body based intuition and a kind of brutal honesty. He wanted to create dramaturgical space for 'big appetites' but, at the same time, he abhorred excessive pathos and idealism. When Baal sings in the Inn scene he praises this anti-idealistic, down to earth, materialistic approach to life.

BAAL: Orge thought the best place known to man
In this world was the lavatory pan.
This was a place to set the cheeks aglow
With stars above and excrements below. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p.14)

“heart and blood in it”

When referring to the heart component of the metaphor, Brecht does not just mention the vital organ, but also hints at its function. The fact that it contains blood reminds us that the heart is responsible for the wellbeing of the whole body. This image associates the pumping heart with the stream of life that transports all the elements needed for the vitality of a physical body and, in this case, a body of text. A few months before Brecht created this metaphor with reference to a healthy heart, he decided to remove the attic scene from the 1919 revised version of *Baal*. This scene contained an

autobiographical allusion to Brecht's weak and troubled heart. The following excerpt (complete quote pp. 23-24) from the original 1919 attic scene shows that Baal's heart did not have the strength and vitality that the author Brecht wanted his play to have. If any facet of the character was strong, it was Baal's will to live, or more precisely, his will to live to complete his work.

BAAL: ... Damn! The heart! It is only 3 nights and 2 acts and already? Nonsense. The dear God says Halt, only afterwards. *He falls forward on a chair, groans.* (Schmidt, 1966, p. 97)

It is important to note that the metaphor contains the heart only in reference to its physical function. Brecht ignores, or overlooks its role in emotionality. I see this omission as having a two-fold cause. The first is a deliberate refusal on the part of Brecht to follow both the hyper-emotional style of the expressionists and the German literary tradition of romanticism, or indeed perhaps merely a lack of interest in this style. The second is a more personal motivation, either conscious or subconscious, to downplay the significance and importance of emotions. These two causes, in my opinion are interwoven and again there should not be a dualism of either an autobiographic/psychoanalytic understanding or an aesthetic/political understanding of the writer's literary choices. I will discuss the more personal aspects of the omission further in Chapter Six.

“lungs”

The lungs have to be seen in conjunction with the physiology of the heart and Brecht's specific heart condition. The lungs and the heart work together in this vital process to sustain the textual body. But the crucial collaboration of those two organs is obviously endangered by the weakness of the heart. To get ready for writing on his play, Baal opens the window and takes a deep breath of the outside air. The heart cramp follows almost immediately:

BAAL: “A drag of air into the lungs!”.... *Turning round, he puts his hand to his chest, staggering.* (Schmidt, 1966, p. 97)

In the same scene of the 1922 version, Brecht kept a reference to the heart present in the text, but did not present it in the context of his weak and troubled heart. On the contrary, the heart here seems to be linked to Baal's virile sexuality:

BAAL: *He listens*. My heart's pounding like a horse's hoof.... But now I smell the warm May nights.... I must move. First I'll get myself a woman. To move out alone is sad. *He looks out of the window*. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 22)

In this version, Baal does not open the window to get fresh air into the lungs and he does not get a heart cramp. He exits to pick up a woman from the street. Prior to this, he had experienced a moment of claustrophobia, when thinking about Johanna's suicide in the river, which he had provoked through his behaviour towards her.

BAAL: "Oh Johanna, one more night in your aquarium, and I would have rotted among the fish." (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 22)

Baal experiences anxiety in the closed and restricted attic, with no air to breathe and reflecting on death, and he counters the claustrophobia by an escape from the room pursuing his unfolding sexual desires. He appears to be reliant on sex to abate his anxiety, and to feel alive and connected to his vital energies. In the 'Hut in the Forrest' scene when Baal dies, he wants to leave the hut because he fears suffocation. This is not a lung problem but the symptom of an impending heart attack. The cramping of the whole chest is a warning of the agony that will follow. As a playwright, Brecht included the lungs in his anatomical metaphor because he demanded a spacious playing area for his unbounded poetic work and lust for life.

"let it run, with a kick!"

The first impression might be that Brecht gave a playful finish to his metaphor with the image "let it run, with a kick!" However to think of a writing process that needs legs is extraordinary. It puts something that could be too heady onto its feet and shows again the body-centred approach that Brecht had expressed through his anatomical metaphor regarding playwriting.

Brecht may have found inspiration in a poem by Frank Wedekind, whom he admired tremendously (he named his first son after him), and who had a huge influence on his development as a dramatist and lyricist (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 193):

Don't avoid the earthly treasures
Where they lie, take them with you
The world has laws only so
That one kicks against them. (Wedekind in Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 194)⁹

Like Wedekind, Brecht often expressed his wish to be free from narrow-minded Christian and bourgeois morals. To write *Baal* or any other play and to "let it run, with a kick!" meant to follow Wedekind's anarchic suggestion and kick against all obstructive laws. Despite any threats of censorship and in opposition to common rules about high art literature, the author had to give legs to his writings so that the crust of laws that restrict artistic creation from breaking free and moving would crumble, leaving the writing free to 'run, with a kick!'

Conclusions to Brecht's 1920 anatomical metaphor

Brecht of 1920 wanted his creations to be able to breathe and move with a vitality of the heart that was lacking in the creator's own body. On September 11th 1938, he wrote that *Baal* "was always a torso, he was then still operated on a few times.... The sense got almost lost with it" (Schmidt, 1968, p.109). Brecht created here another anatomical metaphor for *Baal*. Sadly, he now perceived that the play had been both amputated and decapitated: no head, arms, legs or feet, this body, the play itself, was just a torso. The suggestion here is that it was by now a corpse.

Brecht never explained why he removed the heart problem from the 1922 version. It seems that he didn't even consider this to be one of the

⁹ Hillesheim contemplates on the possibility that Brecht might have known Wedekind's poem *Erdegeist* by 1918 and finds proof for it in the clear connection between the last verses in Wedekind's poem and Brecht's poem *Philosophisches Tanzlied* written in February 1918. (Hillesheim, 2005, p. 194)

reasons for the disappointing decline in quality of his first play. The prologue to the 1918 version ends as the stage directions instruct: *Baal eats! Baal dances! Baal is transfigured!!!* (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 367). A play about someone like this needed “intestines, heart and blood in it and lungs” and Brecht was happy to provide these to his first creations of 1918 and 1919. Then he started to operate on the script and did not “let it run, with a kick!” A kick with his feet might have smashed the laws of censorship and self-censorship and maybe *Baal* would not have been published. Instead, Brecht’s pragmatism dismissed the more complex compound of strength and vulnerability of the first two versions of the play. He himself questioned the quality of the revised version. He came up with the powerful anatomical metaphor for how he wanted to create plays in the future. And with an astonishing mix of pragmatism and lust for life, he moved on. But it is questionable whether Brecht’s future work did actually manifest the 1920 anatomical metaphor. Indeed, in general in his later body of work, a lusty anarchism seems to have given way to more ‘reasoned’ visions of the world. In the next chapter I will discuss what I believe are some of the influences for this development in his style of playwriting.

Chapter 5

Developing a new style of playwriting and the 1920s

Zeitgeist

From 1920 onwards, Brecht's writing developed the qualities that were to become his signature traits: detachment, coolness and objectivity. After attempting to shake off the remnants of Expressionism through working on *Baal*, he was determined to radicalise his writing style. The distinctive coolness and brutal objectivity that were developing in Brecht's work were perhaps indicative of the *Zeitgeist* of the 1920s and Brecht's move to Berlin in 1924.

During this time, the big cities such as Berlin were akin to jungles – wild, unpredictable and dangerous. Detached emotional coolness was a survival strategy for a society that had been through the horrors of the First World War and was faced with the severe economic consequences of losing that war. Politically, Germany was becoming polarised between the extremes of left and right wing ideologies. This was a climate that required decisiveness and afforded no prevarication. It was an ideal climate for a writer with a sharp, edgy, decisive style, such as Brecht was developing, to gain recognition.

Reflections on his early artistic development in the 1940s

In an unpublished and undated letter to his son Stefan (probably written in Santa Monica in 1944), which the Berliner Brecht Archive kindly granted me permission to view [footnote: this material is still in the process of being collated by BBA], Brecht wrote about imperviousness, indestructibility and resilience, concepts that had greatly occupied him and his playwright friends when they were young. Having lived through a great war, Brecht and his friends asked themselves how one could treat the theme of imperviousness in one's artistic work in a completely personal way. How could one become impervious? The problem was not immediately

recognizable according to Brecht. They began to realize that the social climate of that time caused artists to wish to become impervious, but at the same time society expected a kind of productivity (not only in the artistic arena), which was dependant on sensitivity. This meant that anybody productive, including artists had to pay the price of vulnerability. The solution for Brecht was to develop a type of imperviousness attained through a social sensitivity, a kind of sensitivity for the collective. This way, Brecht thought, the rigours of class conflicts could be looked at from a historical, not only private viewpoint and become collectively remediable.

In another undated letter to Stefan, presumably also written in Santa Monica, Brecht expressed concern over his son's health, particularly emphasising his sensitive nervous system. To avoid aggravating this problem, Brecht and Helene Weigel cancelled their son's music classes and advised him to avoid all rumination and to tell the doctor in precise and objective terms what was wrong with him.

The demand that his son should be objective and describe in precise terms what was wrong is reminiscent of the literary strategy employed by Brecht, whereby, in order to maintain objectivity and to be able to accurately describe something, one must keep emotional involvement at a certain distance. And vice versa, in order to achieve the distance, one must describe something in 'precise and objective terms'. Brecht was to use the same principles when formulating his theories on acting, as is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Brecht's new style emerges

With the following note, written on his 24th birthday in 1922, it seems that Brecht had already begun to formulate his strategy of distancing, as an aesthetic position for a playwright:

I hope that with *Baal* and *In the Jungle* I've avoided a big mistake of other art: the endeavour to sweep away [the audience]. Instinctively I establish distances and make sure, that my effects (poetic and philosophical) will be limited to the stage. The splendid isolation of the spectator will not be touched ... he will not be calmed, by being invited to sympathize, to become

incarnate with the hero and, by looking at himself simultaneously, as two specimens, to appear ineradicable and significant. (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 271)

In the process of revising the 1919 version of *Baal*, Brecht decided to exclude or camouflage any autobiographical elements in the play. The question arises then as to what effect this form of 'distancing' would have on his writing style for the theatre. Only two years later, the nucleus of what would become the Brechtian style began to form, as is illustrated in the above quotation.

Before 1920 – Brecht's psychophysical vulnerability

Before 1920, Brecht's psychophysical vulnerability, which manifested in his heart cramps, was very difficult for him to handle, mainly because those 'panic attacks' were so unpredictable. On October 21st 1916, after being at home for two weeks with health/heart problems he stated:

I have such hunger for something real. Now I'm held captive already for two weeks. I even long for the school. And I want to work again, with head and limbs, become rich, exert an influence, play chess with people. I can write, I can write plays, better than Hebbel and wilder than Wedekind. I'm lazy. (*GBA*, vol. 26 pp.107-109)

Brecht was a young man who wanted to experience 'something real', with mind and body and he knew that he had the talent to be able to write great plays. The fact that he accuses himself of being lazy indicates a level of self-criticism that often accompanies those who set very high standards for themselves. When he started to work on *Baal* in 1918, he began to realise his ambitions and the language he found to create his first play was extremely physical and earthy. That he would one day be called a "Classic of Rationalism" would have surprised him, but only in regard to the trait of rationalism.

There was little indication at this time that he would start to favour the head over the body in the future, except the note in his diaries, also in 1916, after experiencing a frightening heart cramp: "I command my heart." It is possible to read in this note the idea that Brecht had become extremely

conscious about the possibility that his heart could revolt and become a deserter. In the 1918 and 1919 versions of the play, when the character Baal dies he says: “My heart is jumping away.” Again it can be concluded that with these words Brecht found the perfect poetic image to frame his feeling of uncertainty regarding the unpredictability of his heart. It could have ‘jumped away’ at any time, which metaphorically means it could have distanced itself from Brecht. He then began a process that can be understood as one of distancing himself from his heart, which may have been an attempt to take on the superior position of a commander. However in the first two versions of *Baal*, the unpredictable heart is still part of Baal’s body (and of the body of text). Also at this stage, Brecht still values physicality and sensuality very highly in his writings. Intellectualism or forms of poetry produced in an ivory tower were clearly not his choice.

A shift towards the head as the locus of control

During the 1920s, an observable shift towards the head as the centre of consciousness and locus of control in Brecht’s work occurs. It is not without ambivalence though, that he moved towards rationalism. To fully comprehend this ambivalent position, it will be necessary to look again at Brecht’s physical metaphor for his ‘ideal play’ that I analysed in Chapter Four. Whilst it covers the most important life-supporting organs and processes, it is quite revealing that he does not mention the head. It is almost as though this part of the body is held responsible for the lack of poetic strength and the tone of domesticity that he is so critical of in the 1920 revised version of *Baal*:

He [Baal] has become paper, academicised, slippery, shaved and with swimming trunks and so on. Instead of earthier, more carefree, cheekier, simple ... Now I will make only fiery mud dumplings! (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 129)

I have suggested that there was a shift in Brecht’s writing style from an earthy, body-centred approach towards a more intellectual approach, with the head as the locus of control. It needs to be clarified though that this was not a complete shift; it was not as simple as that. As I stated in my

introduction, the shift was not towards a dry intellectualism. Brecht continued to write in a physical, earthy manner, though eventually the physicality lost the wild and sensual nature that it had had in the early *Baal*. It was a much more restrained, contained physicality, set within a dialectical context and with a didactic purpose. As previously discussed, this can be seen in the *Seventh Song of the God of Happiness* where physically locating happiness “close to the ground” corresponds to a social order of low and high. Evident in this song-text is that, for Brecht, the (physical or materialist) foundation of happiness is to be found in the opposite direction to the high ideals that are represented by the church and bourgeois society:

Friends, when you devote yourselves to me
And it could be worth it
Realize, you no longer will be tolerated
Amongst the upper regions!

Since the Gods of reputation and rank
Have in any case
Abandoned me, the short and fat one that I am, for good
Into the pigsty (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 928).

The shift in Brecht’s writing style from an earthy, body-centred approach towards a more intellectual approach, was to later impact upon his theories on acting and theatre. In Chapter Seven, I will focus on how Brecht’s heart problems can be seen to have influenced his development as a theatre and acting theorist. The occasionally polemical style in some of his theoretical texts raises the question as to how much Brecht was still involved on a more personal level and if this might be another reason why his theories have caused misunderstandings.

From merging to distancing

In his development as a playwright, the strategy of distancing can be observed in his shift away from metaphors. A metaphor can be defined as a comparison between two things, where one is said to be the other. There is, for the duration of the metaphor, no distinction between the two. They are

merged, as a way of making a statement about one of them. In Chapter Six I will go into detail about Pietzker's findings regarding Brecht's overly merged co-dependent relationship with his mother. Suffice to say, now, that Brecht was suspicious and frightened of situations in which he felt his individual boundaries, and therefore his autonomy, was being threatened. It is possible that in a literary sense this anxiety is made manifest through a mistrust and dislike of metaphors. Instead he came to see the allegory as the more reliable way of making a statement through comparison:

There is a higher form of interest: in the allegory, in the other, the inestimable, the surprising. (Schmidt, 1968, p. 101)

Henning Rischbieter analyses Brecht's use of the literary metaphor by quoting and commenting on Volker Klotz:

Brecht's attitude towards the metaphor is cautious. Volker Klotz (*Bertolt Brecht – Versuch über das Werk Darmstadt 1957*) describes how Brecht to a large extent avoids the metaphor "of which two arms fall into one ... His metaphors accentuate the 'two-armedness': they are comparisons." They are mostly executed in a detailed way, the rational element of the comparison manifests in the 'how', which separates the two arms. [Klotz again] "In the 'how' lives the didactic Brecht ... The detailed comparison of the events proves to be the little brother of the parable". (Rischbieter, 1974, p. 24)

Verfremdung, Verfremdungseffekt – 'lost in translation'

Brecht's caution towards the metaphor and his interest in comparisons, the allegory and the parable can be seen as stepping stones towards developing his concept of *Verfremdung*. This term is unfortunately often misunderstood, and therefore it needs to be examined closely.

Meg Mumford discusses the origin of the term *Verfremdung*, and the mistranslations of the word:

Like 'Gestus', the term '*Verfremdung*' is the result of Brecht's playing with old words. '*Verfremdung*' ... first appeared in his writings in 1936, since when trans.ators have had almost as much fun with it as Brecht did. 'Alienation' is the most common – and most unhelpful – translation ... I prefer to use 'defamiliarisation' because I think it conveys more clearly the fact

that Brecht regarded *Verfremdung* as political intervention into the (blindingly) familiar. (Mumford, 2009, pp. 60-61)

I agree here with Mumford and see 'defamiliarisation' as a more appropriate term than 'alienation' if we want to come closer to an understanding of Brecht's own search for the use of *Verfremdung* in his writings for the theatre.

Although it is true that an understanding of what Brecht meant by the term *Verfremdung* is crucial, if we wish to understand Brecht's theories, it is interesting to note that in his practical work with actors, it did not hold as much importance. Regine Lutz who was an actress at the Berliner Ensemble from 1949 to 1960, said in an interview that she had not once heard Brecht saying the word *Verfremdung* during rehearsal (Schütte, 2008, film).

During his years in exile (1933-47) Brecht did not have much of a chance to stage his plays, and so there is not much evidence from this time as to how his theories translated into a practical application. Mumford mentions that Brecht's work with Charles Laughton as 'Galileo' in 1947 was "the first time in America [1941-47], Brecht was working with a talented performer who, (...), demonstrated an ability to achieve commentary through gesture" (Mumford, 2009, p. 34).

And after returning to Europe, Brecht seemed not so keen on developing his theories, but rather focused on developing his skills as a playwright-director. In February 1956, he said to a group of young people who wanted to talk to him about his programmatic text, "What I've set out in the *Short Organum* is only valid to a certain point". He continued with "Theatre takes place on the stage" (Schoeps, 1989, p.186). Brecht's theories were in a constant state of development. Towards the end of his career he was not so much the hardliner he had earlier appeared to be. And not to forget: "Contradiction was always a vital feature of Brecht's theatre. (...) At the heart of dialectical thinking is the belief that contradictions are the source of change and progressive development" (Mumford, 2009, p. 85). It is possible that the confusion surrounding terms such as *Verfremdung* is a consequence of Brecht's complex and contradictory thinking process.

Uncertainty has prevailed in the translation of Brecht's terminology into performance practice. For the English-speaking theatre world, there was the additional question of how to translate the German word *Verfremdung*. Ironically, the overall confusion about its application seems to have culminated in the wide use of the word 'alienation', as Mumford points out. It is important to locate this mis-translation because it has led to further misunderstandings regarding the practical application of the term *Verfremdung*, when it becomes *Verfremdungseffekt*, or V-effekt.

Mumford offers a definition of V-effect, as given by Brecht:

In the 'Short Organum for the Theatre,' Brecht cogently describes his V-effects as 'designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today' by means of a representation 'which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar'. (Mumford, 2009, p. 61)

Due to the "most common – and most unhelpful – (mis)translation" (Mumford, above) being 'alienation', *Verfremdungseffekt* has in turn most commonly been mistranslated, and therefore misunderstood as the 'alienation effect'. But Brecht did not wish to alienate his spectators. He wished instead to defamiliarise the subject matter of his plays in order to facilitate an understanding within the audience.

It becomes increasingly clear that the concept of alienation is not to be merged with Brecht's V-effekt, particularly when understood in the Marxist sense of alienation. Mumford draws attention to the paradox:

According to Marx, humans alienate themselves from the products of their intellectual, economic and social activity when they forfeit control of a part of themselves ... by making that part into an alien Other. (Mumford, p. 61-62)

She notes in particular Marx's concept of "the economic alienation of the labourer in the capitalist system of commodity exchange" (Mumford, p. 62). She concludes that:

Given Brecht's familiarity with the significance of *Entfremdung* for Marx, and his own vision of humans as capable of controlling their own destiny, it is misleading to translate *Verfremdung* as 'alienation'. Far from wishing to plunge spectators into a state of

alienation, Brecht sought to challenge a condition of alienation through a theatre of empowering observation. (Mumford, p. 62)

Brecht, Hegel and the heart

While it is important to see the connections between Brecht and Marx when analysing the misleading translation of *Verfremdung* into 'alienation', we have to look at another philosopher to understand the origins of the German word. In the following, I will examine the connection between Brecht's ideas on *Verfremdung* and Hegel's use of the word *Entfremdung*.

According to Jan Knopf's analysis of the term *Verfremdung*, until 1936 Brecht used instead the word *Entfremdung*. In 1807, the philosopher Hegel had introduced this term to German philosophical language. Knopf also remarks:

Brecht-research has already early on pointed out the description in Hegel's *Phänomenologie*: 'The familiar is not recognized, because it is *familiar*' (the term "Entfremdung" does not appear in this context). This sentence, which captures what Brecht means, is set out by Hegel in 1809 and has been connected with the term "Entfremdung" ... is valid as the real historical source of the term, as Brecht used it:

But to become *objectified*, the substance of nature and of consciousness have to face each other, she (nature) must take on the form of something strange. – Unhappy he who will be estranged from his direct world of emotions; – because this means nothing else as that the individual bonds that befriend feeling and thought in a holy way with life, – faith, love and trust, will be torn apart for him! – For the estrangement which is the condition of 'Bildung' [a process of formation through learning demands not the moral pain and not the suffering of the heart but the lighter pain and the exertion of imagined ideas to deal with something that is not immediate, estranged, with something of the remembered, the memory and belonging to thinking. (Knopf, 1986, p. 95)

According to Hegel "the condition of 'Bildung' demands not the moral pain and not the suffering of the heart". Hegel did not suggest a split between *heart feeling* and thinking, promoting instead "the lighter pain ... to deal with something that is not immediate, estranged ... belonging to thinking." This was exactly the strategy that suited Brecht, who had to find the right distance to command his heart but did not want to lose it: the strategy of stepping

back and thereby becoming able to look at a problem. What is notable is that here Brecht is again creating psycho-physical imagery – ‘stepping back’ – through language. I conclude that the image of the stepping away from the heart expresses Brecht’s opposition towards Aristotle’s concept of theatrical catharsis, which demanded a step into the fire of heart-felt emotions to be cleansed. (Also, ‘stepping back’ from his heart problem meant for Brecht that he is the active one, the ‘commander’, while Baal’s sentence “my heart is jumping away” means the heart is making the decisions and Baal is passive – he dies.)

However it was more than just the image of distancing/*entfernen* that inspired Brecht. *Ent-fremden* and *ent-fernen* are both words that suggest a process of taking distance from an original, familiar standpoint or point of view. In Hegel’s philosophy, *Entfremdung* can be seen as a process of emancipation through thinking. *Ver-fremden* and *ver-ändern* (to change) are actions that transform an original subject into something new. Therefore Brecht’s use of *verfremden* and *Verfremdung* can be seen as a combination of *ent-fernen* = distancing and *ver-ändern* = changing. This is what is basically necessary if we want to achieve a V-effect: distance, or stepping back is needed to recognize the full scope of a situation and ‘defamiliarisation’ avoids the danger that we will just see what we already know. The description in Hegel’s *Phänomenologie*: ‘The familiar is not recognized, because it is *familiar*’, elucidates this point. Brecht used Hegel’s application of *Entfremdung* and developed his own terminology with *Verfremdung*.

Brecht’s critical thoughts about ‘head control’ in *Baal*

Although it is clear that thinking was one of Brecht’s favourite activities, with *Baal* he did not promote a form of story telling derived solely from the intellect. For example, in the scene, *Brown Wooden Bar*, the character of the ‘Beggar’ tells a story about a man in the woods, who tried to communicate with the trees, and arrives at a conclusion that is clearly irrational:

GOUGOU: What did the tree say?

THE BEGGAR: Yes. And the wind blew. A shudder ran through the tree. And the man felt it. He threw himself down on the ground and he clutched the wild, hard roots and cried bitterly. But he did it to many trees.

ECKART: Did it cure him?

THE BEGGAR: No. He had an easier death, though.

MAJA: I don't understand that.

THE BEGGAR: Nothing is understood. But some things are felt. If one understands a story it's just that it's been told badly." (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 43)

My impression is that here Brecht is deliberately playing with his own ambiguity towards intellect and emotion. The Beggar is not portrayed unequivocally as a wise man, but neither is he a total fool.

In the 1926 version of *Baal*, Brecht displays a similar ambiguity towards the question of whether Baal has a heart. Shortly after Emilie accuses Eckart and Baal that they "don't even have a hole, where others have a heart", Baal replies: "Refused." This abrupt response is all he says. Later in this scene he sings a song:

BAAL: Oh you, who have been driven out from heaven and hell

You murderers, who experienced much troubles!

Why didn't you stay in womb of your mothers?

Where it was quiet and one slept and one was there...

The banjo is also not right Eckart!

ECKART: Continue! It is not a disgrace to have a heart.

JOHANN: This is a good song. That's my thing, romanticism!

ECKART: Another bucket of romanticism for a coal merchant!
(Schmidt, 1966, p. 177-78)

Brecht seems to be oscillating between a disdain for, and an attraction towards, romanticism in *Baal*. On the one hand, the character Johann, who states that romanticism is his 'thing', is ultimately presented in the play's narrative as a weak and therefore doomed character; and Eckart, who is heralded as a representation of all things bohemian, derisively calls for 'another bucket of romanticism' for him. Just prior to this scene though, Eckart declares his support for the heart in his appreciation of Baal's song, which seems to have a kind of romanticism that idealises murderers, beggars and thieves.

Self-censorship

I have mentioned before how important it was for Brecht to have his first play, *Baal* published and that he eventually made it less provocative to increase the chances of realising this ambition. I concluded that Brecht acted very pragmatically here and with long-term career planning. However, the question of how conscious the process of self-censorship was for Brecht still remains. Did he omit Baal's heart cramps from the second attic scene because he thought this would increase his chance of being published or was the reason of a different nature? If it was self-censorship was he aware of it? He never openly commented on his reasons for cutting the material involving the heart problem.

Brecht did give a specific hint though as to why he omitted all scenes in which Baal's mother had appeared, noting that: "In this way I banish the spectre of "The Lonely One" [novel by Johst] towards the periphery" (*GBA* vol.1, p. 513).

I argue that there was also another reason, of a more subconscious nature, why she had to be banished from the 1922 and all the following versions. In the attic scene of the 1918 and 1919 versions of the play, Baal's mother enters the scene immediately after he has just experienced a heart cramp. This prompts us to ask how much the heart cramp was connected to the conflict between Baal and his mother. In Chapter Six, I will examine Pietzcker's psychoanalytical view of heart neurosis and his theorised connection between Brecht's heart condition and conflicts with his mother.

This viewpoint implies that in order to overcome the heart cramps, Brecht had to overcome his mother's psychological hold over him. I would like to suggest that he symbolically attempted to do this through cutting the mother character out of his first play. The fact that she did indeed die a few months later and the nature of Brecht's immediate reaction to her death will also be discussed in the next chapter.

In the process of rewriting the 1919 version of *Baal*, the struggle with questions of censorship might have been the tipping point for Brecht, marking the beginning of his shift towards a more overt logo-centric orientation:

Compared with the adjustment of a play, state bankruptcy is a veritable wedding night." 1920 (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 114)

The process of distancing himself from autobiographical material and rewriting *Baal* was a major operation for Brecht. When he creates the above wedding night metaphor, we know by now that his irony has a function. Vulnerability had to be compensated for with a fictional imperviousness. In his interpretation of his early plays during the 1940s, he labeled this shift as both an aesthetic and political choice. He described *Baal* and other early works as forerunners of an uncompromising literary style. Choosing "a social sensitivity, a kind of sensitivity for the collective" to cope with the paradoxical situation of an artist in a capitalist society, was a decision made by the politically awakened Brecht. His decision is based on the class affiliation that he had chosen for himself, and was most likely influenced by his study of Marxism in and around 1926.

Pietzcker's psychoanalytical interpretation of Brecht's astute political criticism focuses again on Brecht's early conflict with his mother, especially his fight for autonomy. He concludes: "In his anxiety driven fight for autonomy he takes the social/political fight for autonomy more seriously than others" (Pietzcker, 1988, p. 56). If Pietzcker's conclusion is accurate it is possible that this complex led to the development of the highly sensitive and creative style of social and political commentary in Brecht's plays.

Conclusions regarding Brecht's new style of playwriting:

In *Baal*, the title character is an emerging writer. This play was arguably Brecht's literature laboratory where he could also invent himself as a writer. With *Baal*, Brecht drew on his life experiences and traumas for material.¹⁰ However, the need to demonstrate his unique style generated conflict with this approach. My suggestion is that he decided that in order to make autobiographical traumas productive they had to be hidden or camouflaged. Of course it may also have been the much simpler scenario whereby Brecht had begun a process of maturation as a writer, and therefore had moved on from a need to focus on or include autobiographical material in his plays. Indeed, both factors may have played a role in his approach to writing. Nevertheless, the development of Brecht's distinctive style led to his public success, and whilst this success cannot be simply explained as the result of the repression of an internal conflict, I argue that his strategy of distancing to achieve objectivity was more than an aesthetic choice. I believe it was a tool to master emotions, especially overwhelming fears of loss of autonomy, abandonment and death.

Anatomically speaking the process of distancing oneself from something or somebody is led by the intellect and therefore the head, whilst merging is a heart matter. In order to merge we must empathise. In order to empathise we must engage emotionally, or through the heart. Creating distance means that we have to objectify. To some extent we have to disconnect from emotional bonds and operate, instead, through the intellect. In anatomical terms therefore the shift in Brecht's writing is away from the heart towards the head.

¹⁰ I would like to refer here to Carmel Bird's assertions on the autobiographical source of all fiction, particularly that of an estimable literary value. Bird claims "...writers find the material for fiction in their own memories of life...the source of the material of fiction is the life, the experience, the memory, the self of the writer." (1990, p.1)

Chapter 6

The (un)written heart in *Baal* and *Journeys of the God of Happiness*

The last three chapters have examined psycho-physical aspects of the play *Baal* and its title character, together with associated observations on the genesis of Brecht's playwriting style. This allows me now to focus specifically on the central concern of this exegesis, the heart. Brecht's heart problems were always at the centre of my research. But I cannot analyse nor understand this subject if I examine the heart in isolation. I am also aware that it is counter-productive to try to make the heart the most important motif in Brecht's extensive body of work, and to try to understand everything from this perspective. However, there is rich material concerning the (un)written heart in *Baal* and in *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. I feel that it is worth exploring how images and resonances of the heart appear, fade or are camouflaged by the author.

My decision to choose *Baal* as the starting point for my research has to do with the appearance and disappearance of autobiographical material in the play's journey through its five versions. And as Hillesheim notes: "... the complexity of the play has not over time been sufficiently deciphered and the real motivation that led Brecht to write *Baal*, is unclear (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 233).

Pietzcker has suggested that Brecht's heart neurosis can be seen as a key to his life and writing (1988, p.17). He readily admits that any attempt to gain insight into a subject as complex as that of Brecht is ambitious. And furthermore, he also acknowledges that the heart neurosis is not the one and only key to the holy grail of Brechtian scholarship. As a theatre practitioner and researcher, I appreciate Pietzcker's approach. I believe that the field of psychoanalysis can provide an extremely informative and useful tool towards gaining an understanding of a writer and his work. I argue that the powers of

the subconscious cannot be ignored in investigations into the performing arts.

However I would again like to affirm that my research purpose lies not in discovering and understanding the cause of Brecht's heart neurosis. I wish instead to understand how much the condition may have been a key element in his growth as an artist.

In connection to this question, I have also asked: what were the main literary influences for Brecht that might have challenged his view of the heart and how did such views influence his writing? Shakespeare plays a leading role here, as he does in other areas of Brecht's development as a playwright.

Shakespeare, Brecht and the heart

According to Høystad, "Freud could be understood as the attempt to describe in theoretical terms the complex psyche which Shakespeare (described) in a literary way" (2006, p. 175). He also claimed "One could call him [Shakespeare] the first psychoanalyst, because he sees through and explains the driving forces and motives of his characters" (2006, p. 170). Mumford states "Brecht developed a respect for ... Shakespeare" (Mumford, 2009, p.1). It is likely that what Brecht was impressed by, apart from his skilful use of poetic language and the sheer amount of plays that he wrote, was Shakespeare's use of a kind of unabashed realism; "He portrays his environment and his fellow men in word and action, with all their strengths and weaknesses" (Høystad, 2006, p. 170).

Høystad also highlights the point that "Shakespeare counts the heart; it shows what man hides in himself" (2006, p. 170). In many instances, Shakespeare uses the heart to symbolize humankind's volatile nature. Høystad mentions Hamlet as an example of constant change (2006, p. 175). This must have been another fascination for Brecht who was dedicated to portraying the changing and changeable human being. But Brecht's connection with Shakespeare seems to go beyond the normal respect when it comes to the play about the Danish prince. I argue that it is a kind of love-hate relationship that Brecht develops with the character Hamlet. In a poem

“On Shakespeare’s play ‘Hamlet’” he criticises him harshly for his lack of statesmanlike responsibility and calls him a ‘fatso’ (GBA, vol. 11, p. 269). When Hamlet finally “sees red” it is too late. Had he fought sooner to claim his throne there would have been no need for a bloody end to the story. “Something is rotten” in the state apparatus! The individual must control his feelings, in particular when he is responsible for the welfare of many. Later in this chapter, I will examine in detail one example of how Brecht uses his deep knowledge of Shakespeare’s play to camouflage his own heart matters.

The disparity in the relationship with the heart of these two writers is significant; particularly as it seems at times to be the only thing they ‘disagree’ on, as the following example illustrates. In choosing to adapt Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* (1951-52), Brecht found an opportunity to explore another anatomical metaphor. In Act One, Scene One of both the original and Brecht’s adaptation, the character Menenius tells an allegorical tale where the stomach represents the Roman senate. Other parts of the body accuse the stomach of laziness, of taking all the food whilst they do all the work:

There was a time when all the body’s members
Rebell’d against the belly: thus accus’d it:
That only like a gulf it did remain
I’ the midst o’ the body, idle and unactive,
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
Like labour with the rest. (Craig, 1914, p. 810)

In Shakespeare’s original the stomach replies in its defence:

I am the storehouse and the shop
Of the whole body: but, if you do remember,
I send it through the rivers of your blood,
Even to the court, the heart, to the seat o’ the brain. (Craig, 1914, p. 810)

Revealingly, in Brecht's adaptation, he translates the above lines directly, except for the line concerning the heart, which he omits. Could it be that Brecht found the image of the heart as "the court" and "the seat o' the brain" too confronting to repeat? Why would he leave out just this one body part? In attempting to make his translation more succinct than the original, he did make significant edits, but to take out just one line from a monologue such as this is surely not editing for the sake of brevity?

The heart as a universal symbol

Of course it is not only Shakespeare who has used the heart as a central image in his writings. And Brecht is not only struggling with his greatest role model in playwriting regarding the heart. Both writers are also reacting here to cultural imprints that are thousands of years old:

In the first written sources of the antiquity of Mesopotamia 3000 years before our calendar, the heart and what it connects with mankind in good and in bad times is already a theme. Whenever the heart is at play it is about life and death, physically as well as in regards to the psychological. (Høystad, 2006, p. 9)

No other bodily organ can compete with the heart on a level of symbolic meaning, whether it is in the arts, spirituality or everyday life. Friedrich Strian compares its emblematic message with the Chinese yin and yang symbol:

in which the dichotomy of life with above-below, good-evil ... is mirrored. The [heart] symbol is suitable as no other to name the ambivalence of man, the incomprehensible and the mysterious ... No wonder that from the beginning the (heart) myth had also social and metaphysical dimensions, which also gave the legitimacy for ritualised inhumanity. (Strian, 1998, p.109-110.)

Shakespeare builds upon and uses this rich history of the heart as a symbol, and utilises its metonymic power. Brecht tries to keep its incomprehensible and mysterious powers under control:

When we talk about the heart, we don't always know if we are talking about the heart as something substantial, so about the organ, which beats in our breast, or about something else, about symbolic values, moral standpoints, or personal qualities, which are represented by the heart. (Høystad, 2006, p.14)

The heart in *Baal*

The above quotation recalls the Attic Scene in *Baal*, in which Johannes describes his passionate love for Johanna by evoking the image of holding her heart in his hand: "she has a living heart, that one can still see fluttering and pulsating in one's hands" (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 27). I will examine this image further later in this chapter, but for now I wish to highlight that for Johannes, this description expresses not only his passionate love. He is also describing the moral dilemma of conscience whether he should take action on these passionate feelings and take his young love's virginity. In this one image, the physical heart therefore not only represents the organ, but also passionate love, conscience, lust and virginity. It becomes increasingly clear what a complex issue this was for Brecht.

When Brecht writes the first two versions of *Baal* (1918/19), his political visions have not yet developed and instead he seems fascinated by nature and cosmic forces and how they relate to human existence, in particular to human physicality. I will examine concepts that locate the heart as the centre of the human body, and the sun as the centre of the universe, as described below by Strian:

The origins of the heart-myth can be found in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Judaea and in ancient China. However, the earliest heart-symbols already contain more than the simple observation that the life-giving element for self-perception is the heartbeat and for outside-perception it is the sun ... In the Old-Babylonian Gilgamesh epos, Gilgamesh kills the heavenly Taurus, cuts out his heart and gives it as an offering to the sun god. In ancient Egypt the heart was weighed during the death- judgement. When the inner organs were taken out for mummification, a heart substitute, the scarab (sun-animal) was implanted. Heart mystic and sun mystic were closely tied. (Friedrich Strian, 1998, p. 109)

This leads directly to Baal, who can be seen as the follower of a peculiar sun cult:

BAAL rising ecstatically, full of sun: My soul is that sunlight, which is trapped in the diamond when it is buried in the deepest of rocks. (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 55)

The above description by Strian illustrates the mythical connection between the body and its inner organs as the microcosmic representation of our planetary system, in which the heart and the sun were described as central to the concepts of human self and planetary universe. The early *Baal* is reminiscent of this myth. One could say that modern science did not allow Brecht to hold on to this 'centralistic' idea. He also seems very able to give up on the image of the heart as "the court, ... the seat o' the brain", as Shakespeare still saw it.

The symbolic potency of the heart in Brecht's early writings

The following example shows how the 20 year-old Brecht utilised the symbolic potency of the heart in his early writings on *Baal*:

YOUNG MAN: I have a lover, she is the sweetest woman, that there is.

The 'young man' (later named Johannes) declares this to *Baal* in the first Attic Scene of the 1918 and 1919 versions. He describes her eye-pleasing beauty in much detail, fantasizes about her tanned, smooth skin and then changes the subject abruptly:

YOUNG MAN: But this is not the essential thing, she has a living heart, that one can still see fluttering and pulsating in one's hands, and she blushes, when I laugh....

BAAL: Is she innocent? (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 27)

In this scene, the heart symbolizes passionate love and also hints that the young man's girlfriend, Johanna, is still a virgin. Importantly, the young man speaks about the actual organ that is 'fluttering and pulsating' in her chest, rather than about some neat not exactly heart-shaped icon that has come to represent love in its often bastardized public appearance. The young man feels as though he is holding her actual organ in his hands and that he could take her innocence in that same moment, an innocence that is both emotional and sexual. *Baal* advises against doing this, because:

BAAL: ... when you've taken her, nothing of her is left than a pile of flesh that always desires. (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 28)

In 2008, Hillesheim published *Bertolt Brecht – First love and war* in which he presents detailed evidence that suggests that Brecht used the characters of the *Young Man* (later *Johannes*) and *Baal*, to demonstrate his love and desire for his first love, Paula Banholzer. He also underlines the similarities between the *Young Man*'s description of *Johanna* and Paula (Hillesheim, 2008, p. 23-33). It seems that Brecht cannot reconcile what he views as conflicting feelings towards Paula. On the one hand, there is pure, ardent, innocent love: on the other hand, raw lust. He therefore splits them into two separate characters – Johannes and Baal. In the 1922 version of the play, the Young Man, now Johannes no longer claims to hold Johanna's heart:

JOHANNES ...I saw her once in a dream being made love to by a juniper tree. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 10)

Baal responds to the dream image with the comment:

BAAL: As the juniper tree's many roots are entwined within the earth, so are your limbs in bed. Blood flows and heart beats. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p.10)

Here the image of the heart is present in a description of a sexual encounter. Of course, lust does not necessarily negate love but it seems that Brecht has now significantly reduced the importance of romantic love. The emotional dimension of the heart as a symbol for love that was present in the 1918 and 1919 versions has vanished. The disappearance of this image of Johannes holding the pure, innocent heart in his hands could be interpreted as a dismissal of romanticism, but it could also be seen as an attempt to demote the position of the heart. In Baal's above comment, the heart is no longer the main point of focus. It is presented as just one part of the body that is fulfilling its function.

Heart, emotions and relationships

In 1919, Paula Banholzer gave birth to a son conceived with Brecht. Her father opposed the idea of a marriage between the two young lovers and

she had to leave Augsburg during her pregnancy. In 1920, she returned, without the child and the couple's first son, Frank, subsequently lived for many years with successive foster parents (Hillesheim, 2005a, p. 80). Brecht's relationship with Paula Banholzer continued, but during her absence from Augsburg another woman had captured his interest, Marianne Zoff, a singer at the Augsburg theatre. Something symptomatic in Brecht's romantic liaisons emerged in this triangular situation that he described at the end of the nineteen twenties as follows:

I was also too soft for my own liking. I avoided decisions, especially those, which put something unknown and imagined instead of a known visible. I was unable, to end relationships from my side. (*GBA* vol.26, p. 292)

This lack of emotional clarity and strength towards women¹¹ stayed with him for the rest of his life. Helene Weigel, his wife from 1929 up to his death, said to their daughter Barbara after Brecht's death: "Actually your father was a faithful person, unfortunately to too many" (Schütte, 2008, film interview). In his relationships as well as in politics, he is ambivalent. In both contexts, he avoids exclusivity. In his marriages, he demands his right to be with other women and while he clearly demonstrates his leftwing conviction to the world, he never became a member of a communist party.

Pietzcker has suggested, that it was Brecht's early ambivalence towards his mother, which made it extremely difficult for him to develop trust in his own emotions. The physical manifestation of this conflict in the heart is a psychosomatic problem. Brecht's suffering from a heart neurosis made it difficult for him to be in a state of flux that would give him the necessary emotional information for an effective decision-making process. Emotional chaos could cause frightening heart cramps and Brecht reacted to this possible interconnection with a denial or at the very least a mistrust of matters concerning the heart. At the same time one gets the impression that he did not really avoid emotionally difficult situations.

¹¹ Kebir (1987) gives a subjective and differentiated analysis of Brecht's relationships with women.

His relationships with Paula Banholzer and Marianne Zoff appear as mutual dependency during the economically difficult times of 1919 and the early twenties. It also upset him that his son Frank lived separately from himself and Paula Banholzer (*GBA*, vol. 26, pp. 228-29 and p. 233). It needs to be asked what might have happened if Paula's father had agreed to a marriage between his daughter and Brecht. Admittedly this is purely a speculative question. But I want to suggest that his bohemian lifestyle was not entirely his choice and that he had been prepared to form a family with Paula and raise their son Frank.

Marianne Zoff went through a pregnancy that was overshadowed by sickness and the ongoing problem of her unfaithfulness. That Brecht was with Zoff and Banholzer at the same time appeared to be excusable behaviour for him but not for his women. When Marianne lost the child, he wrote on May 7th 1921: "that she has left my child, because she does not have a pure heart. I don't love her anymore, but watch cold" (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 210). Two days later on May 9th the tone was even more accusatory: "The whore shouldn't have my child, my child left her, as she did not have a pure heart" (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 211).

Brecht evinced a quasi-religious, Christian denunciation of an unclean, guilty heart in his judging of Marianne for continuing to be with her lover Recht, a much older business man who was madly in love with her and who had the money to support her. In this situation, Brecht began to idealise Paula Banholzer: "I spend a lot of time with Bi, who has become very thin in this time of distress for her and has become childlike and beautiful and a truth again. I love her and respect her" (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 210).

Brecht's heart and the battle between life and death

During the years when Brecht suffered severe heart-cramps it seems that for him the heart had become the epitome of the battle between life and death. His diary entries, especially those from the years 1916-1921 (which I have already quoted in this exegesis) document this. The dualism of romantic love and raw sexuality (as observed earlier in the scene of Baal and Johannes) is a conflict that can be seen in connection with this battle.

In its most clichéd form, a not really heart-shaped icon that stands for love and emotion symbolizes the heart. Brecht radically opposed these banalities. However the irony and cynicism with which he seemed to battle the clichés of an outdated romanticism, were in many cases weapons in his camouflaged skirmishes between life and death. His words “I command my heart” meant that he did not want to lose it, neither to death nor to any woman. This attitude did not result in a total rejection of women because, like the living heart, they could give warmth, the feeling of being alive and moments of happiness. The problem was that those moments were too brief: “I have little appetite. I’m full straightaway. Lust would be the only thing, but the breaks are too long ... ” (1927) (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 289). Thinking was probably a more controllable process, but even here he feared pauses. The solution was to have both choices. He seems to play with the image of being a great thinker, as well as being a great lover: “For a strong thought, I would sacrifice any woman, almost any” (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 289). Male chauvinism was not really Brecht’s choice in life, although he clearly enjoyed flirting vicariously with the exertion of power in sexual and emotional matters through a character like Baal. He could not afford to have a heart full of irrational love and desire, attributes he had given to the women in *Baal*:

SOPHIE: Beat me if you want, Baal. I won’t ask you to walk slowly again ... Don’t drive me away, Baal.

BAAL: Throw your fat body into the river. I’m sick of you, and it’s your own doing. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 40)

Sophie is desperate at this point in the play because she is pregnant and afraid of being left alone. Ekart, who is with them, offers to stay with her and bring her to her mother: “if you say you’ll stop loving this swine.” Baal answers for her: “She loves me.” and Sophie echoes: “I love him.” A few seconds later the two men are in a terrible fight:

SOPHIE: Mother of God! They’re like wild animals! ...

BAAL *pressing Ekart to himself*: Now you’re close to me. Can you smell me? Now I’m holding you. There is more than closeness of

women *He stops*. Look, you can see the stars above the trees now
Ekart. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 41)

Love appears here as a fight for life, or is Baal flirting with death? Ekart decides that he “can’t strike this thing” named Baal and walks away with him, leaving the pregnant Sophie behind in the dark. Later, Baal will kill Ekart. He will stab him with a knife, bringing an end not just to Ekart’s life but also to a (suggested) homosexual love affair. The image of a romantic heart is far away from this accumulation of cruelty and violence. The brutality Baal demonstrates is inhuman; it is something that cannot be judged in the framework of any civilised moral code.

Galigei – “the living man without a heart”

It is worthwhile to mention here another of Brecht’s play-characters, Galigei – the title character of the play fragment by the same name. Like Baal and the God of Happiness, Galigei represents ‘big appetites’. Already in 1918, Brecht mentions his plans for “a new play for the theatre of the future: The fat man on the swing-boat” (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 996). But it is probably only in the spring of 1920, that he actually starts working on it:

I don’t know if the preposterous mix of the tragic and the comic in Galigei can be at all arranged, which consists, that a man is exhibited, who after *such* manipulations on him is still alive!

(The immortal one because of incompetence, the living man without heart!)

... It is the vision of a meat-block who grows rampantly to the extreme, who only copes with any change, because he is missing a centre, like water flowing into every form... (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 223)

In 1925, he puts the fragmentary material together and explains: “These are the main manuscripts of the comedy *A Man is A Man or Galy Gay* ...” (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 997). Galigei is a *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* character (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 998), split into two, and he no longer has any control over his identity. He can be seen as the epitome of man in the 20th century.

For Brecht, it is “the living man without heart!” who survives the monstrosities of the times. Brecht says about Galigei: “The time is merciless/*unbarmherzig*, in the past such a bloke would have gotten away unscathed” (*GBA*, vol. 10.1, p. 18). The time is *unbarmherzig*, which literally translated means that the time has ‘a heart without pity’ or ‘a pitiless heart’. And Galigei “only copes with any change, because he is missing a centre”. He is “The immortal one thanks to incompetence, the living human without heart! ... The question: Is he alive then? He is being lived” (*GBA*, vol. 26, p.223).

To attribute Brecht’s conclusion to Marxist theory would be premature, as he made this comment in 1921. He only began to study Marxism in 1926. In 1921, Brecht’s political visions as a playwright are not following any ideological guidelines. Just a few days after he wrote the above words about Galigei, he notes:

“One should hit the nation into the heart. Each play a battle. To develop oneself in the middle of a people. To exercise power” (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 225). The imagery that he develops to celebrate his lust for power is poetic and politically incorrect. In the same journal entry, he refers to himself as a “golden half-god”, a master who walks through the jungle and who “treats humans like plants, sickles them down, like niggers, with incomprehensible guttural sounds in their throats, who only understand the whip.” In the end, he, the master himself, “dies like a plant”. He is not the political dictator or tyrant, but the representation of a cyclical life power. Plants die and new life grows from their decay. This corresponds with the philosophy of death in *Baal* and in its own way is a form of immortality. It is the atheist’s (Brecht’s) answer to the concept of an afterlife (and closely resembles Nietzsche).

Galigei in contrast is not a master, but a victim. “The citizen Joseph Galigei fell into the hands of evil people who beat him up badly, took away his name and left him there without skin” (*GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 996). “The immortal thanks to incompetence, the living human without heart!” And for Brecht, this absence of heart indicates a loss of centre. It is a dark time not only in Brecht’s life, but for all around him, a time when imperviousness is needed.

When Brecht writes *Journeys of the God of Happiness* 20 years later, it is the human urge for happiness that seems immortal, something that “can never be entirely killed”. When the authorities capture the God of Happiness and the executioners try to finish him off, he laughs at them. He is immortal – the living God without heart.

***Brecht and Death* – International Brecht Society in Augsburg 2006**

It is the fear of death and the lust for life that constantly struggle in Brecht's *Baal*. This plays out as a very personal confrontation: Baal is face to face with death, such as in the heart attack scene of the 1918 and 1919 versions and the scene “Forest: A wooden shack” (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 80).

For the 2006 conference: *Brecht and Death*, I examined the above-mentioned scene, when Baal is in the process of dying. When analysing Brecht's work, we can see that he has borrowed from a wide range of world literature. A very important source here is Shakespeare, as mentioned previously. The main focus in my paper was on Brecht's use of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in his camouflage technique. Here the literary techniques of borrowing and camouflaging can be seen to be working interdependently.

Excerpt from my 2006 conference paper, published in 2008:

“My heart jumps away.” Brecht's Baal dies.

The final part of the scene, “Forest: A wooden shack” (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 80), in Brecht's *Baal* is the starting point for this investigation. The woodcutters have left the hut. “*Baal on a filthy bed*” is aware that he is nearing death. How Brecht alters the 1922 (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 83), 1926 (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 139) and 1955 versions of this scene, by replacing the sentence “my heart jumps away” yields insights into his evolving approach and handling of the subject matter of the heart and death. The words “To sleep” replace “My heart jumps away” in the 1922 and 1955 editions of *Baal*; “Falling asleep” is used in the 1926 edition (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 167).

“To sleep. One. Two. Three. Four” (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 137). Initially this sounds rather strange. What does Baal count, after the thought of sleeping comes into his mind, and what does “To sleep” have to do with “My heart jumps away”? Dying – sleeping. Shakespeare’s Hamlet’s famous monologue “To be or not to be” offers a solution to this conundrum: “To die, to sleep – no more; and by a sleep to say we end the *heart-ache*, and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to;” [*Italics added for emphasis*] (Jenkins, 1982, p. 278).

Brecht might have decided to cut his personal heart problems from *Baal* – but did he reinsert them in enciphered form, implying that his fear concerning the vital organ had not disappeared? I have discovered a further connection to Hamlet’s monologue, albeit a speculative one. If one assumes that Brecht had access to “Hamlet” in German as well as English, then the original edition could have yielded a further association for him. “...and by a sleep to say we end the heart-ache, and the thousand natural **shocks** [*bold added*]” is reminiscent of Brecht’s own words: “with all the sports at secondary school I gave myself a ‘heart-shock’, which introduced me to the secrets of metaphysics” (*GBA*, vol. 28, p.177). The Arden Shakespeare “Hamlet” edited by Harold Jenkins contains an insightful explanation of the English term “shocks”: “62. shocks: The primary sense of “clashes of arms” is usual in Shakespeare ... and here resumes the battle metaphor” (Jenkins, 1982, p. 278). A resonant military metaphor surfaces as Baal has a heart attack in the attic scene: “The dear God says stand down only afterwards” (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 35). Or Brecht’s diary entry from 1916: “I command my heart. I impose a siege over my heart.” (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 108).

How far does Brecht go with this game of hide and seek? Which other issues and autobiographical concerns has he imbued in *Baal* through the use of the word “sleep”? “To die, to sleep –/To sleep, perchance to dream... ay, there’s the rub” says Hamlet (Jenkins, 1982, p. 278).

With Baal there is no indication that he is afraid of anything that may occur after his death, and no wonder given that he does “not believe in an afterlife” (Schmidt, 1966, p. 55). His concern with the heart attack in the attic scene concerns the occurrence of a premature death before he can

complete his play. At the beginning of his death scene, it is not the dreams that may await him, but the hallucinatory vision of Ekart which bothers him. Hamlet's fear of the unknown dreams within his final sleep is, in all probability, not the same fear as Baal's. Baal is not troubled by thoughts of "The undiscovered country, from whose bourn/No traveller returns – " (Jenkins, 1982, p. 279).

To die and to sleep

What are Shakespeare's sources when he speaks of dying and sleeping in the same breath? Harold Jenkins refers to Montaigne, who in turn refers explicitly to Socrates¹² in relation to Hamlet:

If it be a consummation of one's being, it is also an amendment and entrance into a long and quiet night. We find nothing so sweet in life, as a quiet rest and gentle sleep, and without dreams. (III. 12. Florio's trans.) (Jenkins, 1982, p. 489)

Shakespeare, in a sense, refutes Socrates' dreamless sleep of death, and lets Hamlet ponder the issue. By contrast, Brecht, who initially draws on Shakespeare when he alters "my heart jumps away" to "to sleep", joins the ranks of the ancient Greek and is silent on the topic of dreams. Baal does not speak of a fear of the sleep of death, nor does he refer to the dreams, which may come with it. It is the dying itself, which troubles him and keeps him restless. How does one die and where does one die? What are the last impressions before the sleep or rather unconsciousness and thereby "not being" begins? Baal makes a simple distinction between dying and sleeping in the scene "Trees in the evening". Baal is talking about the corpse of Teddy:

BAAL. *Above him:* He has his rest and we have our unrest. Both are good. [...] After sleep, one wakes up. Not him. Us. That's doubly good. (GBA, vol.1, p. 113)

¹² Socrates is believed to have uttered these words at his death in 399 BCE.

Hamlet Conclusions: An example of camouflaging

The possibility of a premature ending of his life influenced Brecht's early literary work and was inseparably linked to material such as *Baal*. When Brecht replaced the phrase "My heart jumps away" with "To sleep" in Baal's death scene (as previously mentioned), it is quite possible that he was processing his own heart problems in an enciphered form. Of course no normal reader would have the five editions as well as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at hand to facilitate a comparison, and thus if this is a camouflage it is a purposely very hidden one.

Baal's death and the light in the night

In the death scene, Baal seems to count himself out: "To sleep. One. Two. Three. Four." If this is the countdown to switching off all organs, including the tired heart, what then stops him from slipping into his final sleep? "I cannot. I don't want to. One suffocates here" (Schmidt, 1966, p.148). What thoughts are racing through his head? Is the surrender to sleep forever being questioned? Or is it the sudden breathlessness, which once more reignites the struggle for life? Not only the head, but all of existence is lit up once more. Energies are released that were unthinkable only a moment ago.

The fact that Baal wills himself to resist and escape death is shown by the following: "*Very clearly*. It must be light outside. I want to. *Struggling, he rises*" (GBA vol.1, p. 82). It is night and no full moon is mentioned, but the hut's darkness and the feeling of suffocation lead Baal to believe in a light that brightens the night. This 'vision of light' in the death scene is common to all five editions of *Baal*.

Death by heart attack and visions of light are intimately linked in a poem by Brecht from 1920:

MY BROTHER'S DEATH

...He did not see us. Blinded by the light.
He did not speak. His throat was too tight.
He clasped his chest in that place
Where his *heart* resides, ... (GBA, vol.13, P. 163))

Although the poem is entitled “My Brother’s Death”, the symptoms that the poem’s protagonist suffers are similar to those suffered by Brecht. I refer again to Paula Banholzer’s description of Brecht’s heart cramps (Chapter 1). The line in the above poem “His throat was too tight” is also reminiscent of the shortness of breath that Baal suffers during his heart cramp in the death scene: “One suffocates here” (Schmidt, 1966, p.148). Whether the line “Blinded by the light” indicates that the fictitious brother had visions of light is unknown. Near-death experiences are often accompanied by visions of light. It will be impossible to determine how close the young Brecht actually came to death, and I do not believe that any further search for evidence in this respect would be ethically acceptable.

Severe shortness of breath is a common symptom of late stage, terminal heart disease. Both motifs, shortness of breath and visions of light, coupled with the wish to leave the hut, appear in all five editions of *Baal*. Beyond this, there are marked variations in the manner in which Brecht lets his Baal escape the darkness; the way he reaches the threshold of the doorway (symbolically the threshold between life and death), what gets in his way, the wishes and curses he utters and from whom he seeks help. Notable is Brecht’s alteration of the sentence: “Hell! Dear God” (1918/19) to: “Damned! Dear Baal” (1922/55).

Stars, sunlight and the heart in *Baal*

BAAL He crawls on all fours to the door’s threshold: Stars ... Hm.
He crawls outside. (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 82)

Once he has reached the threshold, Baal sees himself in relation to the cosmos through the light of the stars. Even though he does not believe in an afterlife he seems, through this cosmic connection to acquire an awareness of the infinite. The light of the stars delivers to him the unknown that cannot be expressed in words. What he seems to manage, is to create an inner resonance. The “Hm” is not accompanied by a question mark. I would argue that Baal does not die a sceptic. “Hm” might create an inner vibration and a physical sensation of wellbeing in him. In Augsburg Florian Vaßen gave me his interpretation of the expression “Hm”. In his opinion Baal

looks up to the night sky, pronounces the word “Stars” and then tries to say “Himmel” (engl. “sky”), but does not succeed. The mutilated word “Himmel” escapes Baal’s lips as “Hm” (Vaßen, personal communication, 2006).

Baal has made the connection between micro- and macrocosm. And the “Eternal Light” – a reference to Christian liturgy may be excused at this point – shines in him as well as in the sky. Nevertheless Baal remains, as Florian Vaßen writes, “a parody of the Christ-like poet figure Grabbe [protagonist in Johst’s novel *The Lonely*] in Jost, being simultaneously a polemic against the Christian aversion of all things natural and worldly, as well as an acknowledgement of pantheistic tendencies” (Vaßen, 1989, p.18). The latter becomes particularly evident in the scene “jail cell” where Baal uses his very own, peculiar conception of “soul” to contradict a clergyman:

BAAL *rising ecstatically, full of sun*: My soul is that ray of sunshine,
which is trapped in the diamond as it is buried in the deepest of rocks.
(GBA, vol.1, p. 55)

It is the light of the sun through which Baal transcends. In the night, it is the stars, which reflect the sun’s light. When he arrives at death’s door, it is light, which gives him the strength to cross the threshold and crawl back into nature.

In Baal’s poem “Death in the forest” (GBA, vol. 1, p. 70) two men, who bury a corpse under a tree, make a very strange observation. As they leave the forest and turn around to look: “The top of the tree was full of light. And the young ones crossed themselves. And they rode into sun and heath.” In the 1919 version, the first sentence is particularly emphasized, by double-spacing between the individual letters as such:

T h e t o p o f t h e t r e e w a s f u l l o f l i g h t (GBA, vol. 1, p.71).

and the tree under which the man is buried is described as a grave-tree.

Although there is a striking resonance of Christian imagery here (Christ’s dying on a cross made of wood and subsequent resurrection), Baal is not presented as being Christian. The two men in his poem may have

“crossed themselves”, but Baal on the contrary appears to be a follower of a peculiar sun cult, apparently invented by himself. If there is a god-like power for him, it is the light. The fact that this power outlasts death can neither be taken as evidence that Baal believed in life after death in the Christian sense nor that he believed in any concept of reincarnation. Rather, he has developed his own pantheistic religion, without Church or community. It is an outcast’s mystical view of light.

In the scene “Trees in the evening” one of the foresters, sitting by the corpse of his colleague Teddy, asks: “Where might he be now?”

BAAL: as he points to the dead: There he is.

THE THIRD: I always say, the poor souls, it is the wind,
particularly in the evenings during spring, but also in autumn ...

BAAL: And in summer, in the sun, above the fields of corn.

THE THIRD: That doesn’t fit. It must be dark.

BAAL: It must be dark Teddy. (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 113)

In Baal’s imagination, souls appear in the brightest light of day. That doesn’t fit with the general conception of a dark death. One wonders whether Baal has carried out studies, which have led to his unusual cosmology? In the first attic scene he tells Johannes that the earth is a sphere, and concludes that:

BAAL: ... It is one of the smaller stars.

JOHANNES: Do you know a bit about astronomy?

BAAL: No.

Silence. (*GBA*, vol.1, p. 89)

Baal observes natural events but processes them entirely subjectively and formulates his insights on the basis of gut feelings. Brecht leaves no doubt that the seat of Baal’s soul is not in his heart. Immortality is restricted to his gut. Baal is the *Ur*-animal – but also human being. He says: “I am no rat” and wants to go from the darkness of the hut into the light outside. Baal senses the limitless nature of space. This intuition differentiates the man from the animal. But then he crawls back into nature, on all fours. With this metamorphosis, we once again chance upon Baal, the god of fertility, the

heavy bull. The man sheds the “thin layer of skin” (for which he has to thank civilization and his own socialisation), and what is revealed is no little, shivering animal. Everything that is required to perpetuate the cycle of god-like nature is there. For in the blink of an eye, Baal is sucked down into the dark bosom of earth, and perhaps with the very next blink of the eye, the young and naked and “incredibly wondrous Baal” (*GBA*, vol. 1, p. 85) glances up at his beloved sky again. We are left to wonder how much time is required to complete the process of destruction and creation and whether it starts in autumn. Perhaps the mother’s lap in white represents the snow covered earth in which Baal awaits spring like a seedling until the God-like, life giving sun should wake him from his sleep.

And what can we say about Brecht? When “Orges’ wish list” states that “of lives, [he prefers] those which are bright/light” (*GBA*, vol. 15, p. 298) this could be a hint that Brecht and Baal, the mystic of light, may have something in common in this respect. However, their ways of dealing with the topic of astronomy clearly differs. In 1986, Gerd Irrlitz refers to Brecht’s adherence to ideas expressed by Galileo:

Brecht’s program of dialectical theatre, his entire highly theoretical conception of reality is in tune with Galileo’s words: “One should not believe that in order to understand the deep concepts written into these maps of the sky it is sufficient to take in the shine and sparkle of the sun and stars, or simply to witness their rise and fall: all this can be observed by the eyes of animals as well as the uneducated masses ... and so it is that the mere sense of sight delivers us nothing in comparison to the wonders that the mind of the knowledgeable may reap from the sky.” (Galileo, letter concerning the Copernican system, cited following Cassirer, 10) (Irrlitz, 1986, p. 20)

Undoubtedly, Brecht believes in the force of reasonable thinking and not in the mysticism of the sun-god as presented by Baal. But what does Irrlitz mean when he writes: “Right thinking leaves no dark shadow, even in one’s own heart” (Irrlitz, 1986, p. 26). This comment comes just after his discussion of Brecht’s second moral dictum, which demands that people should remain “accessible and predictable” (in a social sense). The exchange of words, any conversation, thus reflects “thinking as an act of social behaviour”. Why does Irrlitz bring the heart into this? Is the heart

somehow responsible for a person's social behaviour? When considering our fellow human beings, does thinking involve active participation of the heart, or does "correct thinking" simply mean that the mind's luminescence shines down into the heart? In the German world of symbols and mythology, the heart stands for emotion. One could say with Irrlitz that "correct thought" and heartfelt impulses combine into mature human empathy.

Florian Vaßen's comment, that *Baal* is "a parody of the Christ-like poet figure Grabbe" in Johst's novel *The Lonely*, may also apply to Brecht's immortal God of Happiness. The image of the resurrected Jesus is often depicted with a heart that radiates light. While the crucified saviour concentrates his immortal powers in his heart and the cone of light, which supposedly brings love and hope to his followers, the God of Happiness plays pranks at the gallows and drives his executioners crazy. "*The human urge for happiness can never be entirely killed.*" – this is his eternal, revolutionary message. The followers of the God of Happiness must however somehow "ennoble" his call to "Do what gives you pleasure!" because it is only through the solidarity of the oppressed that the human need for happiness is truly immortalized. (Räuker, 2008, pp.150-163, translated from German into English by Räuker & Craemer) – End of Paper Excerpt)

A psychoanalytical approach to Brecht's heart neurosis

In my exegesis I have defined my research from a different point of view than that of Pietzcker in his book *I command my heart*. But as I have mentioned, it was Pietzcker, who initially inspired me to look at Brecht's heart neurosis from the point of view of a theatre practitioner. It is therefore important for my exegesis to give an insight in how I see Pietzcker's work.

Pietzcker's psychoanalytical approach basically attributes one cause for Brecht's heart neurosis, that of the writer's early relationship with his mother. The behavioural pattern is described in psychology as the result of an "overprotective and ruling mother, who often also suffers from heart phobia" (Strian, 1998, p.103). Brecht's mother was suffering from cancer (Hillesheim, 2005b, p.15) and there is no evidence that she had a heart phobia as well. What we know from Brecht's diaries and his younger

brother's memoirs is that their mother was very protective of her oldest son who was her favourite and also a source of constant worry because of his poor health. Their relationship was described as very close (Brecht, Walter, 1984, p. 349).

To psychologically individuate, a child needs to develop a feeling of independence and autonomy while, at the same time, there must also be the trust that the protection of the mother will not be withdrawn. This starts at an early age, when the child develops an awareness of self. During adolescence, the fight for autonomy is then brought to another level (White, 1986, pp. 43-65). While Brecht first showed symptoms of a heart-related health problem at the age of nine, he was diagnosed with "heart shock" when he entered adolescence. Brecht's first found diary was from 1913. The first note on the 15th May ends "Have again heart problems" (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 9). The last note in December 1913 starts with a little poem titled *Thanks* and ends with a note about his mother:

Lord, I thank you!

I cry it out from distress and sorrow

My chest widens with love.

Lord, I thank [you]!

In the evening full of joy on the train with mama. She looks right good, really, quite full of joy of life! She does a lot, a lot beyond her strength. Thanks, thanks to her! She is the born foster mother! - - - (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 103)

This revelation coincided with the time when his mother started to show severe symptoms of cancer and the whole family had to take her physical deterioration into consideration (Hillesheim, 2005b, p.15). According to Pietzcker, Brecht's behaviour became quite ruthless, because his way of dealing with the heart neurosis was with a counter-phobic reaction. He would even provoke his mother and upset her to demonstrate that he was autonomous. She took revenge by giving him feelings of guilt (Pietzcker, 1988, p. 36). This is mirrored in the scene of Baal's heart cramp in the 1918 and 1919 versions:

MOTHER *outside*: What is it Baal? What are you screaming again for. Since yesterday I haven't closed my eyes! Why do you bolt the door again? Do you have somebody in there again? To lock out the mother! That is terrible! ... *Sobs outside*.

BAAL: It *is* open, mother! I am a little unwell. (Schmidt, 1966, p.97)

Baal's mother accuses him of drinking too much instead of working and of making her life hell. He insists that he is sick but she laments that he is ungrateful and has given her no joy since he was born:

BAAL: But before, Mama!

MOTHER: Oh you blasphemer. *That* is it! And how did I suffer for it...

BAAL *softer*: Mother, be quiet now! (Schmidt, 1966, p.98)

She becomes even more irritated when she realizes that Baal has not been drinking alcohol, because she does not understand why he is so unwell. She then accuses him of sending her to her grave when he will "then want to scrape out the ground with his fingernails ..." (presumably to uncover her dead body). Brecht was to use that same image in one of his psalms after his mother died in May 1920. "Now my mother has died, yesterday, in the evening, on the 1. May! One cannot scrape her out the ground anymore with fingernails!" (*GBA*, vol.11, p. 22)

Ruthless behaviour is typical of all adolescents, who go through what is known as a separation crisis. In asserting their autonomy and as a transition to adulthood, the adolescent often behaves in a ruthless and cruel way towards the mother (White, 1986, p. 43-65). Interestingly, Brecht's behaviour following his mother's death suggests that he may have been undergoing another separation crisis, and that therefore he perhaps did not completely achieve separation from his mother during his adolescence. According to his brother Walter, the day after their mother died following a prolonged illness, Brecht was laughing and behaving raucously with his friends in his attic, whilst the rest of the family were downstairs, silent and in mourning (Brecht, Walter, 1984, p. 250). However, his emotional reactions were much more contradictory. The grieving Brecht even denounced the

idea of God in his play *Oratorium*, accusing him of indifference towards his mother's death:

HIM: Lord, now I want to say to you that you are a good for nothing ...
I do not wish to see you when I drown. Your indifference would fill me
with shame. (GBA, vol.10/1, p. 9)

A few months before his mother died – as indicated in a letter to Hanns Johst from January/February 1920 – Brecht had “thrown out” all scenes in which his mother had previously appeared. “In this way I banish the spectre of *The Lonely One* towards the periphery” (GBA, vol.1, p. 513). Baal's cry for help, when he dies and hallucinates (“Mama. Ekart should go away.”), is nevertheless adopted in the 1922 and 1955 editions – a final reference to the importance she originally had in Brecht's *Baal*. When preparing the 1955 edition, “he wants to revise the mother-scenes of the second version [of *Baal* from 1919]. However, Brecht would not come to realize this intention” (Schmidt, 1968, p. 138).

Pietzcker's psychoanalytic view on the conflict between Brecht and his mother implies that, in order to overcome the heart cramps, Brecht had to overcome his mother's psychological hold over him, which he symbolically did through cutting the mother character out of his first play. However, his plans to ‘reimplant’ the revised mother scenes into the 1955 version could indicate, that this conflict was still unresolved:

MY MOTHER:

I loved her in my way, but she wanted to be loved in hers. (GBA, vol. 26, p.117)

Pietzcker's opinion is that for Brecht the fear of being swallowed by the love of his overprotective and ruling mother and the fear of overwhelming emotions were directly connected. The anxiety manifested in his heart, the symbolic centre of emotional activity, and consequently a fear of death became part of his psychophysical reality for the rest of his life (Pietzcker, 2008, p.134). He never made an attempt to formally analyse the relationship with his mother from a psychoanalytical viewpoint. Instead, he dealt with the pain and psychological stress with which he was often confronted, through

his work as an artist of the word and the theatre. Werner Hecht summarized this in the title of his article regarding Brecht's death and his heart problem: "Writing poetry his whole life helped the poor B.B. against the heart-shock of his childhood" (Hecht, 1996, p. 45). Hecht continues in his 1996 article, written on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Brecht's death-day in 1956:

Fear of death threatens him very early [in his life] On May 22nd 1913 he writes, deeply concerned: "During the night I first had a horrible pounding of the heart, then the beats became very quiet and fast. Papa was keeping watch by my bed for a long time. I was full of fear. An entirely terrible fear. The night was endless." (Ibid)

Hecht concludes that writing helped Brecht to control his fear, "his whole life" as he states in the title of his article. This is almost exactly Pietzcker's position in regards to Brecht's heart neurosis:

... Brecht's behaviour and writing, his subjects as well as his literary techniques and their development were shaped in part by his struggle against fear of death that threatened him continuously from his youth to the end of his life. This fear was an important driving force of his creativity. (Pietzcker in an information-flyer about his paper at the 2006 conference "Brecht and Death in Augsburg.)

Samuel Beckett: his heart and his fear of death

Looking at another paragon of 20th century literature and theatre could add valuable insight into "Heart matters in the development of a playwright and his ideas on acting." Like Brecht, Irish playwright Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) suffered from heart problems of a psychosomatic nature and his relationship with his mother exhibits a similar ambivalent pattern to that experienced by Brecht. For much of his early life, Beckett behaved in a way almost calculated to arouse his mother's anger and concern. He persisted with this behaviour, because to stop would have been to submit. These conflicts became more acute as Beckett grew; they seem to have been a source of great anxiety for both mother (May) and son:

[May's] ... anxiety about Samuel stemmed from what he later described as her 'savage loving'. Equally, it was not that Beckett disliked his mother or did not care what she thought of him. Rather he loved her almost as strongly and cared for her too

much. So conflicts of will became heart-rending struggles with the loving side of himself as well as with his mother, as he saw her determinedly and diametrically opposed to him in her judgements or her expectations. And to feel the weight of her moral condemnation and disappointment, as well as to be distanced from her affection, was an additional burden for him to bear. For they rarely saw eye to eye on anything concerning himself. (Knowlson, 1996, p. 22)

Beckett began to undertake psychoanalysis in London after his doctor explained to him that he could not find a physical cause for his heart problems. Beckett sums it up neatly:

In short, if the heart had not put the fear of death into me I would still be boozing and sneering and lounging around and feeling that I was too good for anything else. (Knowlson, 1996, p.180)

“At the crack of dawn one has his heart cramp, struts then around like from glass, can’t work in the room because of the icy cold” (*GBA* 26, p. 265). These are Brecht’s final words about heart cramps to be found in his diaries in 1921. His heart condition was to later become an integrated part of his daily life and his family had to respect the special rules of living with a great writer who has a weak heart. However the frightening heart cramps that he confided about in his diaries between 1916 and 1921 will have no further mention. “During the time at high school I got a heart shock from all sorts of sports, which introduced me to the secrets of metaphysics.” Brecht wrote in 1922 (*GBA*, vol. 28, p.177). He had decided not only to command his heart, as he announced in his diaries in 1916, but he ignored the emotional side of the problem as much as possible.

The psychological and the physical are inseparable

Hillesheim comments that Brecht attempts to separate the psychological and the physical in describing his health: “Brecht wants to distract under any circumstances from the true nature, the not somatic causes [of his heart problems]” (2005a, p. 39). Brecht’s insistence that his problems were not psychological was obviously a protective mechanism. However some people, including his brother said that he actually had no physical heart problem (M. Morley, personal communication, October 2007).

It was enlightening for me to have a conversation with a medical scientist about this subject. In response to my comment that Brecht “tried to see his heart problem as purely physical and had difficulties admitting that there was an emotional background”, Dr. Gavin Lambert from the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, Melbourne replied:

Keep in mind that even if the basic cause is emotional this does not discount the involvement of a physiological component. This all gets back to afferent and efferent outputs, much of our internal physiology is driven by "afferent signals" from the periphery to the brain being processed and then sending an "efferent output" to the end organ (think of blood pressure regulation). With, let's consider panic disorder, the racing heart rate, the tightness in the chest, the rapid breathing during an attack are all physiological (ie. they are "real") and, while there may be some form of peripheral biological reason why the peripheral effect is magnified, the primary pathology is of central (ie. brain) origin. (G. Lambert, personal communication, August 17, 2009)

Seeking to identify the ‘true’ nature of Brecht’s heart problems, has of course to do with seeing through his camouflage technique and the fact that sometimes he is simply in denial of the inseparable connection between his mental and physical health. In a letter to his writer friend Bronnen in 1923, he claims that he was “From youth on brave (at the age of thirteen I achieved a provable heart-shock through boldness)” (*GBA*, vol. 28, p.188).

On May 1st 1918, Brecht’s father, when asking for his son to be exempt from military service, uses the fact that a doctor had indeed diagnosed Brecht with heart-shock. World War One had not yet ended and the fear of being called to the front was still haunting Brecht. The official background was his wish to continue his studies, however “Additionally the application enclosed a doctor’s certificate which confirmed Brecht having a heart disease” (Hillesheim, 2005b, p. 68).

In May 1917, Brecht wrote in a letter to his brother Walter, that the military recruiting board had decided: “We defer you, be convinced. But it almost breaks our heart! At the same time they all gave me tempting looks and wanted to seduce me. But they had better hearts than I. And that was

also one reason why they didn't keep me by force" (Brecht, Walter, 1984, p. 357).

The majority of Brechtian scholarship has not yet accepted that Brecht's heart neurosis and his resulting fear of death play a major role in his development as a writer and theatre theorist (Pietzcker, 2008, p.134). It is indeed a very complicated subject and, similar to many psychological conditions, seems often based on speculations. This of course might make it hard for some researchers to accept the validity of the argument. The complex interplay between head, heart and body will keep researchers busy, in theatre, as well as in areas that are more accepted as serious scientific research. But also in the scientific world there would be no innovation, if things that are difficult to prove in the first place, would be thrown away immediately. In '*Future prospect: The Heart as a Second Brain*' Strian writes:

Understanding of heart function and its integration into the neuronal network of the brain is perhaps no less novel for psychosomatic access than Harvey's circulation model was in his time. Even today we lack details for a new image of the heart, but its outlines are already recognisable. (Strian, 1998, p.111)

Chapter 7

Heart and emotion in the actor's technique

Regarding Brecht's approach to emotions and empathy¹³ during his career, I suggest distinguishing between three different phases.

The first phase is of the young writer from his adolescent years up to his early twenties (1913 – 1920). As I will describe in detail, Brecht's suffering from heart-neurosis caused him unbearable emotional tension, which influenced his interpersonal dealings with emotions. For Brecht writing became a tool of survival and also an addiction. In this situation Brecht's approach to emotions was not at all 'systematic'. It was trial and error experimentation and *Baal* became a kind of writing-laboratory.

Secondly, from about 1920 onwards a change took place that can be seen as the beginning of Brecht's signature style. He discovers 'distancing' as a way of having a better look at things and he feels that also his theatre audiences and his readers would benefit from this new playwriting strategy. His private life is still an emotional roller coaster, as can be seen in his diaries and letters. But as a writer, he learns to master emotions through 'distancing' and also through a form of "coolness" that he develops in his texts. Emotions are still a fundamental part of Brecht's work, even though he likes to appear more as a mastermind than a man with a heart. It is very important here to realize that his last diary entry about a heart-cramp is in

¹³ In seeking to make a distinction between the terms 'empathy' and 'sympathy', I refer to Lauren Wispé's paper, *The Distinction Between Empathy and Sympathy: To Call Forth a Concept a Word is Needed*. In this paper Wispé "explore[s] the ways in which *sympathy* and *empathy* have been used in psychology and suggest[s] that these terms (a) have different historical roots, (b) have been utilized in different research paradigms, and (c) have been involved in different kinds of theorizing." (Wispé, 1986, p.314, *Italics author's own*) Wispé defines the term sympathy as "the heightened awareness of another's plight as something to be alleviated." (Ibid) The definition she gives to empathy is "the attempt of one self-aware self to understand the subjective experiences of another self." (Ibid) She then goes on to make the distinction that "Sympathy is a way of relating. Empathy is a way of knowing", and affirms that "these are different psychological processes and ... the differences between them should not be obfuscated." (Ibid)

1921. It appears that Brecht is getting his heart neurosis under control. But it could also mean that he ignores it as much as possible.

Empathy is indeed the most problematic emotional field for him in this second phase of his career and he increasingly becomes cynical about this particular heart-matter in writing plays, as well as in his theoretical writings on acting and political development. From 1926 onwards, when he begins his studies of Marxism, it seems that he is fighting an ideological battle with an out-dated emotion, as he believes empathy to be. This is particularly evident when he uses such emotionally charged imagery as “rots away” to express his rejection: “ ... empathy ... certainly rots away thanks to the general decay of our social order ...” (*GBA*, vol. 22.1, p.172). Although it is the social order which is in a state of decay, it is clear that Brecht judges empathy as an integral part of the outdated social order. He does not think that there is a reason for it to survive (*GBA*, vol. 22.1, p.172).

Thirdly, in the later phase of his life he exhibits a softening of his hard-line approach to emotions and even empathy, as is described in my exegesis. However, this is not the focus of my research, and therefore it is less extensive. Also this phase was unfortunately a very short one, because Brecht died at 58, at a relatively young age. During those last years of his life, he might have felt some kind of relief from the fact that he had achieved what he had aimed for as a young writer (fame and respect as a writer). But the status of a world famous writer and 40 years of literary production had to be looked after. And there were a few misunderstandings he had caused and that needed to be clarified, especially on his approach towards emotions and empathy. Still restless and most likely still driven by a deep fear of death, he worked tirelessly. Did he exhaust himself and consequently fall ill in 1955 or was it the other way around? He surely did not have much empathy for himself, when he continued to rehearse, travelled with a Berliner Ensemble production to Italy or worked on publishing his oeuvre, although his health was poor. In the end it was his heart that did not follow his command any longer:

Towards the end of his career Brecht promoted a dialectical approach to acting, one that combined empathic understanding

with analytical demonstration. He also acknowledged that processes he associated with empathy, such as identification (modelling the self on and merging with a desired other), could occasionally be put to good use in his theatre. For example, he welcomed the spectator's identification with the analytical actor-demonstrator, and with characters engaged in active resistance such as Katrin during the drumming scene in *Mother Courage and her Children*. However, Brecht maintained a life-long wariness of other psychological processes such as projection, which involve actors and spectators attributing aspects of their own self and experience to others ('That's just how I would act, that peasant woman is me!'). For Brecht, such ahistorical self-reproduction inhibited awareness of the impermanent nature of the social world, and of how we, too, might be capable of change. (Mumford, 2009, pp. 170-171)

In the following, I will focus on how the heart and emotional engagement are relevant for an actor's technique in the Brechtian style of theatre. In the first part of this chapter, I will examine the artists and practices that influenced Brecht's early approach to the role of emotional engagement in acting. I will then consider some of Brecht's love relationships as evidence that there may be a link between Brecht's interpersonal communication and the development of his ideas on acting. The focus will finally shift to the study of how the twin topics of the heart and emotions were reflected in the work of other groundbreaking theatre researchers and artists. Some of these generated similar theories, which partially influenced Brecht, while others can be seen as being in opposition to his theories.

The "hot heart"

Brecht wrote in his diary on the 20th May 1921:

Meier-Graefe says about Delacroix [the French visual artist]: With him there had been a hot heart beating in a cold man. And this is essentially a possibility for greatness. It is a misfortune for us Germans, that diligence or effort, yes even precision, are regarded as attributes of mediocrity (their abusive nickname is: talents) ... Where do we have this serious, sober dedication towards an idea and just as frequently fanatical dedication towards craft, as for instance in France (in the works of van Gogh, Flaubert, Gauguin, Maupassant, Cezanne, Zola, Baudelaire, Stendhal, Delacroix)? The best works of our epoch will fade because of the lack of ethics in their technique. (GBA, vol. 26, p. 215)

Quite early in his career, Brecht had shown an appreciation for technique and craft in the arts. For him coldness and sobriety were not incompatible with a hot (passionate) heart beating in the artist's chest. The image that he used was very much that of a man who is in control of his emotions. What is surprising though is that the first name in his enumeration of artists is Van Gogh. It is hard to imagine that he was not aware of the artist's severe problems with both depression and rage.¹⁴ It is likely that Brecht was familiar with the painter's psychotic behaviour and considered the level of professionalism referred to as being separate from the tragedy of an individual's illness.

However, Brecht's observation on Van Gogh could be a hint that his own hot heart had to be kept extra cold through brilliant technique and sober craftsmanship in order to avoid the panic attacks that he was still experiencing in December 1921. "At the crack of dawn one has his heart cramp, struts then around like from glass, can't work in the room because of the icy cold" (*GBA* 26, p. 265). As mentioned earlier, this is the last comment about a heart cramp that can be found in Brecht's diaries. On 10th Feb. 1922, just two months later he wrote:

I hope that with *Baal* and *In the Jungle* I've avoided a big mistake of other art: the endeavour to sweep away [the audience]. Instinctively I establish distances and make sure, that my effects (poetic and philosophical) will be limited to the stage. The splendid isolation of the spectator will not be touched ... he will not be calmed, by being invited to sympathize, to become incarnate with the hero ... (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 271)

I cited this note earlier in Chapter Five, because it is mainly a statement about writing for the theatre. However, in the context of the actor's technique in Brechtian theatre, it can also be read as instructions for the performer: do not offend or touch the 'splendid isolation' of the spectator. Do not invite the spectator to sympathize or indentify with your character. Brecht does not say that the actor has to stay "cold", in order to avoid identification

¹⁴ Some believe that the massive collection of over 800 letters that Van Gogh wrote during his lifetime could be attributed to a condition called Hypergraphia, causing one to need to write continuously; this disorder is commonly linked to mania (bi-polar disorder) and epilepsy.

with the character. However there is an important link between Meier-Graefe's note on Delacroix and Brecht's above comments on *Baal* and *In the Jungle of Cities*, which gives valuable information about the heart and emotion in his view of the actor's technique. On the same day (10th Feb. 1922) that he made those comments about his two early plays, he mentioned Delacroix again: "Few remarks about art have struck me so forcibly as Meier-Graefe's sentence on Delacroix: With him there had been a hot heart beating in a cold man" (GBA 26, p.270). The very next note after this can be read as an explanation as to how the contradiction of "a hot heart beating in a cold man" was mastered by Brecht and made productive in his literary work. It is also an indicator of the shift from a body-centred writing style to the head as the locus of control in the artist's life and work:

Man must get free from hard labour through the superiority of his brain. No meanness is meaner, than work. Nothing is more unworthy for a man, than: to do what does not give him pleasure. The men of work are the celebrated slaves. (GBA 26, p. 270)

He continues to write against all forms of slavery, which in his opinion can be put down to "an addiction of man to disguise his true situation ... the feeling of loneliness, being extradited, to have no rights at all" (GBA, vol. 26, p. 270). I argue that in placing the emphasis on the emotional hardship suffered by people in less than ideal work situations, and directing his criticism towards "almost all ideals and institutions", he deflects focus from his own more personal feelings of "loneliness, being extradited, [and having] no rights at all". That he suffered from these feelings is evident in his diary entries from the preceding two years.

Through studying Brecht's diaries, I have become convinced that his early ideas on playwriting, theatre and acting were strongly influenced by his chaotic, torn and emotionally overwhelming relationships with women. The suffering on both sides in these relationships might have assumed inordinate proportions in a time overshadowed by economic hardship, unplanned pregnancies, a miscarriage and illnesses such as tuberculosis. In his diaries, Brecht often used the heart as a metaphor when describing painful and disappointing experiences. He felt "a thin, little stiletto in his thoracic region"

when Marianne told him in April 1921 that she had spoken to Recht about marriage (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 201). I suggest that the irrationality of Brecht's private drama can be seen in the context of his heart neurosis and his ambivalence towards his mother. Pietzcker argues that his anxiety about being consumed by female demands and desires caused his fear of death and led to a desperate fight for autonomy and survival. The psychophysical manifestation of this dark, nightmarish battle took place in his heart. I wonder whether it might have killed him much earlier if some of the pressure had not been released into the headspace of the emerging writer, a realm of creativity and light. From here, "he just looks and sees", like in the *Hymn of Baal the Great*:

And that lusty girl, the world, who laughs when yielding
To the man who'll stand the pressure of her thighs
Gives him instants of a sweet ecstatic feeling.
Baal survives it; he just looks and sees. (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p.3)

Another clue, suggesting the connection between this 'just looking', and Brecht's later more defined theoretical position of distancing, is offered by Ruth Berlau:

When we saw each other for the first time, he gave me his hand, but at the same time he made a step backwards. Nobody will easily imitate Brecht with this trick. Distance, for God's sake, distance! Not only in his directing he demanded distance, but also in private. (Brelau cited in Pietzcker, 1988, p. 71)

This memory of Brecht's lover and collaborator, Ruth Berlau, whom he met during exile in Denmark in the nineteen thirties, may sound merely like an amusing and interesting anecdote. But the following quotation tells us that a lack of emotional distance was a deadly serious issue for Brecht:

Brecht told me yesterday ... I will tell you now something really bad, Ruth, but you need to know it: If I fall over dead on the street tomorrow, it is your fault. You've cost me five years of my life. I'm now fifty-three and look five years older, and you are to blame for it. (Ibid)

Thirty years prior to this heavy judgement on Berlau, Brecht had advocated coldness as a form of emotional self-defence. Shortly after

accusing Marianne Zoff of being the “whore [who] shouldn’t have my child” (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 211), Brecht praises the Meier-Graefe reflection on Delacroix: “a hot heart beating in a cold man” (*GBA* vol. 26, p.214). The heart is the dominant image in these quotations. The unfaithful, unclean heart of Zoff is seen as dangerous to Brecht’s own weak heart, which had to be protected. He “watched cold” when Marianne Zoff had a miscarriage and, a few days later, he saw “a possibility for greatness” in this kind of self-defence. As an artist he began to work with the image of “a hot heart beating in a cold man.”

Brecht, theatre and unwanted emotions

We do not need to go into more detail about Brecht’s tempestuous relationships with Berlau and Zoff. The above quotations suggest how passionately Brecht fought against his fear of being consumed by emotional demands and uncontrollable desires. Arguably, the theatre and playwriting were islands of freedom from his anxieties. Over decades, he had learned to master his inner world by projecting it onto the three-dimensional space of the stage. He, who hated speaking in public, was able to talk to his actors and assistants with great confidence, playfulness and very often with humour, which made rehearsals enjoyable for him and the people who worked with him (Weber & Munk, 1967, p.102 -103). It appears that if he had the necessary distance from direct engagement, he was able to accept the existence of emotions in the theatre:

The essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator’s reason. Instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grips with things. At the same time it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotion to this kind of theatre. It would be much the same thing as trying to deny emotion to modern science. (*GBA*, vol. 21, p. 210)

This would all be reasonable, if there wasn’t the other side in Brecht that fiercely fought against emotions, identification and what he called hypnosis in theatre, with a disgust that was greatly exaggerated.

The general misperception of Brecht's theatre is that it is heartless, cold, distant and sterile, and that the Brechtian actor is a stiff political agitator, with a robotic, monotonal diction. It is partly Brecht's excessive opposition towards feelings that has caused so many misunderstandings of Brechtian acting technique. " ... most directors started with Brecht's theories, using the plays only as vehicles to illustrate theoretical pronouncements. The resulting lifeless productions did little to endear Brechtian theatre to either critics or audiences " (Schoeps, 1989, p. 186).

Brecht himself may not have realized that he potentially contributed to these misunderstandings with his rage against something that was not as dangerous to his spectators as it may have been to himself:

We see entire rows of human beings transported into a peculiar doped state, wholly passive, sunk without a trace, seemingly in the grip of a severe poisoning attack. Their tense, congealed gaze shows that these people are the helpless and involuntary victims of the unchecked lurchings of their emotions.' ['On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre', in John Willett (ed. and trans.), *Brecht on Theatre (BOT)*, 1977, p. 89.]

Those "helplessly relinquished" audience members happen to be in a concert and Brecht is concerned, that the kind of music they are listening to, cannot be used "for political and philosophical purposes". Although he is probably very right with his concern, one wonders why he creates this negative scenario of "severely poisoned human beings"? Pietzcker points out that the older Brecht had some bad memories about the effect that music could have on him from when he was young:

I thought it could harm my heart (which was a little widened through swimming and bicycle riding). I think I can listen to Bach now with impunity, but I still don't like this Beethoven ...and the "bewildered feelings". (*GBA* vol. 27, p. 200)

Perhaps it was particularly the effect of certain kinds of music that triggered Brecht's extreme apprehension? But he had not always felt bewildered when listening to Beethoven. In 1913, when he spent some weeks in a health resort together with his mother, he wrote to his brother Walter about the concerts there: "I've never heard such beautiful music

before. Beethoven I've heard completely marvelous. Do you salivate, when I tell?" (*GBA*, vol. 28, p.10).

Later, in his theatre theories, he tried to wake up those who were 'hypnotized' and 'poisoned' by telling them the truth about their existence as slaves in a phantom-world. He wrote about theatre audiences in 1948/49: "They look at the stage as if in a trance: an expression which comes from the Middle Ages, the days of witches and priests." ['A Short Organum for the Theatre', in John Willett (ed. and trans.), *BOT*, 1977, p. 187.]

His self-appointed mission to save performing arts audiences from such dangers and act as an authoritative guide out of their spectators' blindness gave Brecht great strength.

He wished to deter the expectations of:

...the spectator [who] wishes to come into possession of very particular feelings, as a child might wish them, when it sits down on a wooden horse of a merry-go-round: the feeling of pride, that it is able to ride and that it has a horse; the feeling of pleasure, that it is being carried, past other kids; the adventurous dream, that it is being chased or chases others and so forth. (*GBA*, vol. 23, p.76)

Brecht considered that spectators should be awakened and invited into his 20th century theatre of scientific reason, though with recourse to the strength of their 'merry interests':

If we want now to surrender ourselves to this great passion for producing, what ought our representations of men's life together to look like? What is that productive attitude in face of nature and of society, which we children of a scientific age would like to take up pleasurably in our theatre? ... Our representations of human social life are designed for river-dwellers, ... while we hand the world over to their minds and hearts, for them to change as they think fit.' ['A Short Organum for the Theatre', in John Willett (ed. and trans.), *BOT*, 1977, p. 185.]

Surprisingly, Brecht gives the heart a role in the reception of his "depictions of social existence", however this is only once individual feelings have been subjugated to the "great passion of productivity", which he saw as the ideological and emotional basis of his theatre. This appears to have given Brecht enough distance from his personal heart matters and enabled

the brain to assume primary place in his theatrical experiment. The theatre is described as a kind of laboratory, the world in a test tube handed over to the brains and hearts of the audience. Outside the theatre, it is no longer the world being handed over to the heart, but the heart that is to be handed over to the world, and this was not where Brecht saw his strength. Instead, he protected his vulnerable “hot heart” behind his ‘cool’ aesthetics as a writer, which increasingly derived strength from scientific attitudes. Science privileges objective evidence over personal impressions:

The feeling is a private matter and narrow minded. Reason however is loyal and relatively extensive.” (Pietzcker, 1988, p.156, Brecht in an interview in 1926)

The main purpose of this discussion lies in the context of Brecht’s perspectives on acting techniques. Of these, it is necessary to critically analyse what is useful and what no longer works for us. I reiterate that it is my belief that Brecht’s polemical position towards emotions in the theatre was caused at least in part by his own personal issues. It must also be remembered that Brecht was a poet and therefore some of his more extreme language was perhaps merely poetic rhetoric. Additionally, there is the possibility that it was part of the *Zeitgeist* to write and speak in such a polemical fashion. But poetics and polemics aside, the fact still remains, that the topic about which Brecht was constantly polemical was always the same – that of his distaste for, even disgust with, naturalistic theatre and its Aristotelian catharsis. It is this consistency that indicates that perhaps his distaste and disgust had at least as much to do with personal matters as it did with aesthetic concerns.

I think that Brecht’s fascination for the image of “a hot heart, beating in a cold man” was as consistent as his polemical tendency described above. Personally and artistically, his strategy in dealing with his heart and emotions was, as he predicted in 1921, “essentially a possibility for greatness.” In his work with the Berliner Ensemble, he achieved an artistic mastery based on this strategy of controlling the ‘hot heart’. However it was not the absolute denial, but the restraint of holding back one’s heart, that caused the success.

The actor had to be taught that this restraint should not be boring to watch, but instead would energize the audience's perception.

In the short text, *To show is more than to be* (1954/55), Brecht wrote about the actor Raimund Schelcher:

He plays in the *Chalk Circle* the soldier who is the fiancé of the maid. With the big temperament of a big heart he would be capable as hardly any other, "to sweep" his audience "off their feet", and now he should cast aside the art of carrying away and only show a slightly ponderous man. (*GBA*, vol. 23, p. 315)

The "big temperament of a big heart" had to be refined through the Brechtian technique of distancing. "During the Berliner Ensemble's interactive rehearsals, the actors were expected to ask where their characters stood and how they (the actors) stood towards their characters" (Thomson, 2000, p.105). And that was exactly what Brecht wanted from the character-work of the "masterful performer" Raimund Schelcher:

to criticise and to expose to criticism! In the end he had created a wonderful character. Of course, when I stand in the wings and watch him, I still notice how much this reserve costs him each night, which gives so much to his audience. (*GBA*, vol. 23, p. 315)

On the apparently contrasting topics of empathy and *Verfremdung*, Mumford writes that:

Brecht wanted both actor and spectator to have an informed or engaged understanding of many points of view, *including that of the character* ... he shifted the focus from empathy with the character to a novel emphasis on empathy *with the socially critical actor* Far from removing emotion, *Verfremdung* sets in motion a complex friction that can generate considerable emotional heat. (Mumford, 2009, p. 64/65)

The image of the "hot heart beating in a cold man", that Brecht discovered in his early twenties, inspired first his writing and later his work as a director. The restraint that he asks from the actor Raimund Schelcher, who is very able "to sweep" his audience "off their feet", gives an example of how the "big temperament of a big heart" can be productive in Brechtian theatre if, as I have stated before, individual feelings are subjugated to "the great

passion of productivity". The result is what Mumford calls a "considerable emotional heat". This might surprise those who believe that Brecht wanted an actor who is cold-blooded and shows no emotions at all. But Brecht asked himself:

Can one call the theatre a school of the emotions?

Yes. A process of cleansing through producing emotions is happening. But it is necessary, that also the emotions get cleansed

Always emotions appear, which are enormous and dangerous swamps of social perversion. (*GBA*, vol. 23, p. 305)

We can see here that, in 1954/55, Brecht is becoming more precise with his criticism of catharsis in theatre and his polemics are no longer a general rejection of emotions. In the same instance, he differentiates between different forms of "love for one's country, amongst them very noble and entirely nasty ones." The image of "enormous and dangerous swamps of social perversion" may seem inflated. But it is appropriate if seen in the context of Brecht's experience of how patriotism in Germany was hi-jacked by Nazi-propaganda with its catastrophic social and political consequences. To fully understand how matters of heart and emotions influenced Brecht's ideas on acting, we have to consider the historical circumstances that he had experienced.

Ultimately, my view is that the personal and political aspects have to be viewed in their interconnectedness, as I have already stated in the introduction to this exegesis. I argue that Brecht's apparent lack of interest in this interconnectedness is questionable and is most likely a form of self-defence against his own emotionality. He sometimes fiercely attacks the use of emotions in theatre and loses the objectivity that he otherwise demands from others. These contradictions were eventually made productive in his ideas on emotions and acting, but they arose from his early emotional ambivalence. We should be critical today of Brecht's more polemical comments that may lead to misunderstandings regarding his acting theories and practices. In fact, he himself argued against the misconception that emotions had no place in his theatre:

Ignorant heads interpret the contradiction between playing (demonstrating) and experiencing (empathising) as if only the one or the other appeared in the actor's work.... In reality it is, of course, a matter of two processes, hostile towards each other, that unite in the work of the actor. (*GBA*, vol. 23, p. 291)

He then concedes that, "some of the blame for the misunderstanding has to be given to the style of writing in the Short Organum." Revealingly, he says that it is 'the style', not 'my style' that is to blame, keeping a kind of distance from his own theories, and not really accepting the blame.

A hint on *Gestus*

As a theatre director, Brecht is first of all a pragmatist. He knows very well that his didactic approach to the instruction of an audience only works if his theatre is not boring. His professional terminology for communicating his aims has always this double aim of entertainment and instruction at the same time. One of his inspirations in developing what he later called *Gestus* was the highly engaging performance of Charlie Chaplin:

Charlie Chaplin as early as 1914 (Brecht first saw a Chaplin film in 1921) was already making his body express socialized behaviour in a way that interested Brecht. From the 1930s onwards, Brecht's assertion of a gestic (= *Gestus* and gesture-orientated) theatre was also fuelled by his antipathy towards psychological theatre, which he accused of focusing on facial expression ... to the point where other gesticulation 'dried up'. (Mumford, 2009, p. 54)

As with *V-effect*, the term *Gestus* has been widely misunderstood. Although the English-speaking reader is not confronted here with an unfortunate translation such as 'alienation' for *Verfremdung*, nevertheless there is more than one theatrical application for the term *Gestus*, and like *Verfremdung*, it is a very complex term. Again, Brecht had created an ambiguous and heavily charged term. The need for a practical user-friendly interpretation became stifled under theoretical discussion (mostly after Brecht's death). But again we cannot acquit Brecht from his complicity in the complications. As a 'good starting point' towards clarification, Mumford suggests John Willett's definition:

It (*Gestus*) is at once gesture and gist, attitude and point: one aspect of the relation between two people, studied singly, cut to essentials and physically or verbally expressed. (Mumford, 2009, pp. 54-55)

Mumford highlights Willett's (1977, p. 173) use of the phrase 'at once gesture and gist', saying this is:

...a timely reminder that at the heart of both *Gestus* and Brecht's theatre is the interweaving of sensual activities (gestures) and ideas or social meanings (gists). (Mumford, 2009, p.55)

In my opinion Brecht wanted a naïve and physically expressive approach to acting. Charlie Chaplin inspired him, because he had those qualities and knew how to employ them in a both intelligent and entertaining way. *Gestus* connects Brecht's artistic passion for language, physical acting, speech and music with the world around him – the sensual with the social.

From distancing to intuitive naïveté

While Brecht was in the United States, he "read Max Gorelik's important and influential work on theatre, *New Theatres for Old* (1940)" (Schoeps, 1989, p.187). In this work, Gorelik gives the following description of epic theatre:

On the whole the epic style under the auspices of Piscator and Brecht would seem to resemble a resourceful lecture-demonstration rather than stage production, as we have known it. It is in fact freely admitted that there is no sharp dividing line between epic drama and a demonstration in a surgical or chemical auditorium. (Schoeps, 1989, p.187)

Brecht's reaction to this was understandably one of shock and dismay. He wrote in response, "an odd puritan odour rises from the gorelikian reproduction, something laboratory-like, the aesthetic side shrinks to formalism. (the theatre of a scientific age becomes scientific theatre.)" (In Schoeps, 1989, p.187).

Brecht admits that Gorelik's book brings to his awareness the "theoretical gaps" in his work, and concedes: "I see his misunderstandings"

(Schoeps, 1989, p.187). As a result, Brecht began to move away from an emphasis on *Verfremdung*, towards naïveté, as outlined by Schoeps:

To counter these negative effects Brecht attempted to establish a new approach to his theatre and the new aesthetic category of “naïveté” ... (in which he) wanted people to look at his theatre again, without being burdened by any theories. They should approach his theatre as children approach the world around them: with freshness, wonderment, astonishment. (Schoeps, 1989, pp.187-191)

“brains and hearts”

When Brecht wrote in 1948-49 about the “children of a scientific age” and their new theatre, he was perhaps already trying to establish this state of “freshness, wonderment, astonishment”. He seems to be indicating a desire for a child-like approach to the theatre, an approach that he wishes to be taken by practitioners and audience members alike. In particular, he wants audience members to have open “brains and hearts”. We can assume that he expected the same openness from his actors and with them he would have aimed for what works to:

deliver the world to their brains and hearts, in order to change it at their own discretion.” (GBA, vol. 23, p.73)

Brecht and Diderot

Denis Diderot (1713 – 1784) and his text “Paradox of the comedian” (1773) had an enormous influence on Brecht. In 1937, he planned (but never succeeded) to found what he called the “Diderot Society” as a platform for discussions on theatre and scientific research, paying tribute to the French philosopher’s ideas expressed in his famous text on the actor’s paradox (Roach, 1985, p.197). The essence of these ideas was that the colder the actor was in the planning and execution of his actions on stage, the more convincing he would be. As Joseph Roach comments:

This phase of Diderot’s aesthetic [was] based on scientific materialism, his mechanized ideal of the actor’s impersonal craft, persists in a theatrical theory down to the present day – through Bertolt Brecht, Futurism, Biomechanics, and the *uebermarionette*. (Roach, 1985, p.157)

There is a remarkable connection between Brecht's fascination with Diderot's *Paradox of the Comedian* and Meier-Graefe's comment on Delacroix: "With him there had been a hot heart beating in a cold man" (*GBA* 26, p.271). It is possible that Brecht felt that it might have undercut the sharpness and brilliance of his style, if he was to put too much heart into his literary work. He had to become a cold man with a hidden hot heart, his formula for being an artist with an effective technique. Roach writes about this dilemma:

Extreme sensibility may be the mark of a mediocre artist ... but it also characterizes an exceptionally compassionate man, for example Diderot himself: while the "head makes men wise, the diaphragm makes them compassionate and moral." (Roach, 1985, p.136)

For Brecht the answer to the question about artistic mediocrity seems not as black and white, as it does in the above quotation. The image of "a cold man", if seen separate from that of the "hot heart", has of course a negative connotation. In its extreme, it describes the psychopath who does not show any emotional reactions, even when watching somebody else in despair and pain. However, when this "cold man" has within him a "hot heart," Brecht sees a chance to reach artistic excellence.

I will refer now again to the paradox of the performer, who artistically shapes his natural impulses. Diderot comments:

The man of sensibility obeys the impulse of Nature, and gives nothing more or less than the cry of his very heart; the moment he moderates or strengthens this cry he is no longer himself, he is an actor. (Roach, 1985, p.137)

An exploration of the duplicity of the actor as required by his profession is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is important to state that like Brecht, Diderot believed in the dignity of the profession (Roach, 1985, p.137).

In his text from 1951, "On the actor's profession," Brecht wanted an actor to be preoccupied with himself only in so far as he trains (Hecht, 1970, p. 80/81). He should not indulge in private feelings, but instead work on his technique. This was Brecht's call for discipline and sobriety and he knew

from his playwriting practice that valuable artistic outcomes were not possible without these two traits. He was also aware that the actor's sensitivity was one of the important ingredients for good performance work:

Theatre

Into the light step those

Who can be touched, who can enjoy

Who can be changed. (*GBA*, vol. 15, p. 286)

According to Roach, Diderot believed that the best actors "are fit to play all characters because they have none" (Roach, 1985, p.136). By comparison, Brecht insisted that his actors should have their own political viewpoint and that they should actively comment on their character's behaviour from that viewpoint, whilst performing (Thomson, 2000, p.103).

Brecht borrows from Stanislavski and Meyerhold

[H]owever, the more vitalistic strain in Diderot's materialism yielded an equally rich harvest for the modern acting theorists working on the other side of the vineyard. His allowance for the role of the unconsciousness in the creative process, his emphasis on the organism's capacity to remember and imagine sensation and emotion, his prophetic insistence that mind and body are inextricably interwoven in the same web of nervous fibres, which can be shaped into patterns of response by repetition, recur in some of the most influential writings of modern theorists and in the acting textbooks that dominate formal study in the field. (Roach, 1985, p.157)

Roach does not immediately mention the names of those modern theorists that he refers to here. Stanislavski is most likely one of them. And although Meyerhold's "mechanized ideal of the actor's impersonal craft" (Roach, 1985, p.157) is more closely aligned to the scientific materialism with which Brecht identifies, Stanislavski also made a significant impact on him.

The works of Stanislavski and Meyerhold were both undoubtedly important in Brecht's development as a theatre theorist and as a director. Originally a playwright, dealing with actors as a director was a learning process for Brecht. This involved borrowing from the ideas and practices of other practitioners who were more experienced in training actors. The

following extract from a lecture Brecht gave in 1939 in Stockholm “On experimental theatre” also shows that he had a strong need to present himself not just as a follower of two of the greatest pioneers in 20th century acting techniques, but as somebody whose ideas were even more developed than theirs:

The so called *epic* performance style, which we were developing/instructing at the Schiffbauerdamm-theatre, showed its artistic qualities relatively quickly, and the non-Aristotelian drama began to treat the big social issues in a big manner. Possibilities opened up, to transform the group compositional element of the Meyerhold school from artificial into artistic, the naturalistic elements of the Stanislavski-school into realistic. (GBA, vol. 22.1, p. 556)

It was Stanislavski’s work that Brecht was to become more occupied with during the last years of his life. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Mumford asks:

to what extent can Brecht’s Stanislavski commentary of this period [during *Katzgraben* by Strittmatter, directed by Brecht in 1953] be regarded as a tactical move to avoid political and artistic pressure; and does it constitute a genuine acknowledgment of affinities? (Mumford, 1995, p. 242)

Stanislavski’s system was used by the Stalinists to represent the theatre doctrine of Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union. It was adopted for the same purpose in the GDR. Brecht was criticised for not being loyal enough to this dogma and it is possible that in eventually examining Stanislavski’s methods, he was strongly influenced by the pressure to conform to cultural policy. However Mumford observes that:

had *Katzgraben* been mainly a political tactic, the subsiding of the conference-year furore [First German Stanislavski conference in 1953] would probably have been followed by a rapid waning and eventual end of Brecht’s experimentation with Stanislavski’s system. However, right up until the mid ‘fifties Brecht continued his studies, applying some of the methods even to work that, unlike Strittmatter’s play, were not in socialist realist mode. (Mumford, 1995, p. 256)

Nevertheless it still remains that Brecht’s and Stanislavski’s theories and methods are essentially very different. And it is possible that Brecht felt

quite comfortable comparing his work with Stanislavski's precisely because of this difference. This way it was easier for him to avoid the impression that he was a follower of any great master of acting methodology. He preferred to claim what he found useful and otherwise keep a distance:

as a point of departure Stanislavski directs primarily as an actor, I direct primarily as a playwright He begins with the actor [You] can also hear me say that everything depends on the actor, but I nevertheless begin completely with the play, its requirements and demands. (Rouse, 2002, p. 249)

Recordings of a rehearsal on 18th February 1956, when Brecht worked with Ernst Busch on the character of Galileo in *The Life of Galileo*, give an immediate understanding of Brecht's own emotional engagement as a playwright/director with his actors (der Hörverlag, 1997/2006). The rehearsal at some point became emotionally charged. Brecht explains forcefully his understanding of a specific situation in the play and interrupts Busch several times, with increasing annoyance underlying his thoughtful explanations. One can also hear the controlled frustration in Busch's voice. Brecht stays formally friendly and does not make it an issue that there are these obvious tensions in the room. His main concern seems to be that his way of (rational) thinking as a playwright was leading the tenor of the rehearsal and that he as the playwright was in control. To be the director was the way to protect his rights as an artist who had written a play and wanted it to be staged in a certain way. As Thomson states:

"Brecht entered the German theatre as a writer, and became a practitioner primarily in order to intervene in the production of his own plays." (Thomson, 2000, p.100)

To guide an ensemble during a creative process in rehearsal, a director such as Stanislavski would search for an understanding of the psychophysical processes that each individual actor faces. Brecht was not this type of director. He was much more confident in guiding them through his plays and showing them how to solve the sociological conflicts he had built into his texts. This was not a cold and analytical text work around the table, but a physically active exploration of the play (Weber, 1967, p. 102). Under the heading "A necessity for the actor," Brecht points out that the actor

cannot do his art alone. "He needs his collaborators on a daily basis, in flesh and blood" (*GBA*, vol. 23, p. 315). And Brecht the playwright-director takes a very prominent position in this physical and energetic encounter. Here studying Stanislavski was indeed valuable for Brecht's work with the young Berliner Ensemble.

There is still much general confusion when it comes to the question of what Brecht expected from his actors, regarding emotional engagement in their character work. Rouse achieves a very lucid detailing of this topic of confusion. He states that:

Brecht points out clearly in one of his 1954 appendixes to the *Organon*, the actor's ultimate goal in performance is to achieve a dialectical unity between the gestural presentation of the character in his social relationships and a realistic emotional foundation won through identification. (Rouse, 2002, p. 258)

To achieve this, Brecht devised a rehearsal process of three phases (although he also made clear that the order of the phases was not inflexible).¹⁵ This process can be briefly summarised as moving from distance to identification then back to distance (from both the text and the characters). As Thomson states "[Brecht's] departure from Stanislavskian methods was not total, but graduated" (2000, p.106). The most surprising of the three phases is the second, because it is decidedly not what is generally perceived to be Brechtian:

...the second phase ... in which the actor lets the character react to the other characters, to the milieu, to the fable. As Brecht rather un-epically puts it "this collecting process proceeds slowly until it nevertheless takes a leap – until you leap into the final character, unite yourself with it".¹⁶ (Rouse, 2002, p. 258)

As described by Thomson, "...the second phase is one of empathy" (Thomson, 2000, p.106).

Rouse then details Brecht's description of the third and final phase as a return to the approach of the first phase of distancing:

¹⁵ Brecht, Bertolt (1967a) *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Banden*, Werner Hecht (ed.), Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp. (Translation John Rouse)

¹⁶ As above.

During this phase the actor, having come to identify with the character, to know it from the inside, examines it once again “from outside, from the point of view of society” and attempts to recapture the “mistrust and astonishment of the first phase”. (Rouse, 2002, p. 258)

The practical application of this process is not easy and needs experienced actors, to deal with the multi-layered task. In a very simplified and pragmatic fashion, I would like to say that Brecht’s main rule during the second phase, the phase of emotional identification with the character, was probably to not get carried away. Still, he was a pragmatist and did not insist on his polemical position on emotions that he had shown earlier in his theories, if the rehearsal process required otherwise.

Grotowski – “on body, heart and head.”

In an article on Artaud, entitled *He wasn’t entirely himself*, first published in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1967, and later included in his book *Towards a Poor Theatre* in 1968, Grotowski makes an interesting cross-reference to Brecht as such:

When in numerous European theatres, we watch performance inspired by the “Brecht theory” and are obliged to fight against utter boredom because the lack of conviction of both actors and producers takes the place of the so-called “*Verfremdungseffekt*”, we think back to Brecht’s own productions. They were perhaps less true to his theory but, on the other hand, very personal and subversive as they were, they showed a deep professional knowledge and never left us in a state of lassitude. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 85)

Later in this article, Grotowski is more critical towards Brecht and even towards his own role model Stanislavski:

this knowledge that spontaneity and discipline, far from weakening each other, mutually reinforce themselves; that what is elementary feeds what is constructed and vice versa, to become the real source of a kind of acting that glows. This lesson was neither understood by Stanislavski, who let natural impulses dominate, nor by Brecht, who gave too much emphasis to the construction of a role. (1968, p.89)

It is most likely that Grotowski is criticising Brecht's theories rather than his practice here, because when he wrote about "Brecht's own productions", he stated that they "never left us in a state of lassitude." This discrepancy may have been caused by the possibility that Brecht was less rigorous in the application of his own theories in his productions, than were other directors who faithfully followed his instructions. Grotowski's theatre aimed to strip back social masks, to produce in both the actors and the audience a state of truth that would facilitate connection. This is clearly a point of difference with Brecht, who advocated passionately for a distancing between the actors and the audience, between the audience and the narrative journey and between the actors and their own emotions. Also on basic questions of acting technique, Grotowski aims in a different direction.

awareness, that means a consciousness that is not connected to the language, to the functioning of the computer In it, it comes to the encounter with the heart, to the encounter with an area of the soul, the feeling, although in this case different from our mash of projections, aversions and affections ... If possible we should always speak in a technical manner. But it is clear that this is not enough. (Grotowski, 2005, p. 61-62)

Grotowski presents here a somewhat ambivalent approach to the importance of technique. He continues with "Technique indicates, like a road sign", and says that things come before technique and things follow, which cannot be formulated. It is most likely that Brecht the rationalist theorist would have had difficulty with this nebulous position. Grotowski was obviously on a very different pathway:

When I refer to the ritual, then I speak about its objectivity, which means, the elements of the *Action* are – through their immediate effect – instruments for the work of the "Performer" on body, heart and head." (Grotowski, 2005, p. 55)

Roach summarises the discussion as follows:

At the root the question came down to this: Is the actor's bodily instrument to be interpreted as a spontaneously vital organism whose innate powers of feeling must somehow naturally predominate? Or is it best understood as a biological machine, structured by and reducible to so many physical and chemical processes, whose receptivity to reflex conditioning determines its behaviour?" (Roach, 1985, p.161)

For Brecht, in his text on *The athletic training*, the issue is not so much the question of whether the actor's body is more organism or machine. Rather, he is concerned with the body's complexity as both subject and object:

The training of the athletic arts (art of dancing, art of fencing, also the art of wrestling) is certainly important for the actor, because he has to get his body into his hands. However, it is even more important, that he learns to inform his whole body of the *Gestus*, for which a training in sensuousness is needed. To train the body as an instrument is not harmless, it ought not only be the object, it must also be the subject of the art. (*GBA*, vol. 22.2. pp. 615-16)

Brecht's above quotation was especially important for my work with the students on performance techniques during rehearsing *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*. The Biomechanical actor's training can sometimes become too much concerned with the demand that the actor "has to get his body into his hands." Brecht is right when he warns us: "To train the body as an instrument is not harmless ..." But he is not just referring to dangers of physical harm. What he wants from an actors' training technique, is that it helps to develop an actor who is both the subject of his art and its object.

Artaud – "The Actor is a Heart Athlete"

[The actor's] affective organism is similar to the athlete's being parallel to it like a double, although they do not act on the same level. The actor is a heart athlete. (...) Theatre has an effect on this Double, this ghostly effigy it moulds, and like all ghosts this apparition has a long memory. The heart's memory endures and an actor certainly thinks with his heart, for his heart holds sway. (Artaud, 1970, pp. 88-89)

Artaud is a kind of heart-mystic, in that he focuses on the connection between theatre and alchemy. Having been born at the end of the 19th century, both Artaud (*1896) and Brecht (*1898) had their formative years at the beginning of the 20th century. But the works they left behind sometimes seem to be from different worlds. Artaud uses the heart on a technical and mystical level to formulate his theories of theatrical alchemy. Brecht in comparison puts reason and thinking in front of every advice to his actors.

Although he warns that the body must “not only be the object, it must also be the subject of the art”, the Brechtian actor is first of all ‘intelligent’ and has a predominance of brain over heart. And yet Brecht also demands that the actor “learns to inform his whole body of the *Gestus*” and adds that this needs “a training of the sensuousness”. To such an end, he suggested exercises such as the following: “Mixing of a drink, lighting a fire in a fireplace, eating, playing with children and so forth” (*GBA*, vol. 22.2. p. 616).

There is no collective answer to the question of whether Brecht’s suggestions for actors’ technique still work for us. Even from a scientific point of view, we have to reconsider some of his positions. Emotions are increasingly being seen as valuable sources of information, especially when it comes to creativity, health and also productivity in general.¹⁷ Emotionality can function as a source for intuition, as well as enriched thinking and communication processes.

Brecht’s practical work with actors must have constantly reminded him that theories in theatre are one thing and to create an effective ‘flesh and blood’ performance is another. However, he did not completely change his mindset when entering the rehearsal space. He always rejected an acting style that focused on emotions as the source for artistic development. Therefore he created an anatomical hierarchy for the performer where the brain, as the leading part, would come before the heart.

¹⁷ **‘Emotional Intelligence and the Performing Arts: Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries’**, Emotional Intelligence (EI) developed through the 1990s and into this century as a model of enquiry in psychology and management and has been applied extensively in the field of leadership training. This theory describes emotions as a form of information that can be utilized by leaders to help them make better decisions. The paper referred to above describes the development of an experiential training program that employed the Ability Model of EI (Salovey and Mayer, 1990,1997) combined with tools from the performing arts and drama therapy to create a workshop program. The aim of the workshops was to increase awareness of the role of emotions in working life, and provided interactive learning opportunities to engage with complicated emotional dilemmas arising from their leadership roles. (**Rauker, Skinner and Bett, 2009**).

Chapter 8

Creative Component: *The Performing Hearts Project*

The Performing Hearts Project consists of all the practical performance work that I have realized as part of my doctoral studies since 2005 (see also photo booklet, Appendix 2). The first two productions were non-assessable works in progress. The third was the final doctoral production. These works are as follows:

Performing Hearts Workshop on *Baal* – ECU 2006

***Performing Hearts Solo* – BEAP 2007**

***Journeys of the Happy Buddha* – UNIMA 2008**

The video documentation (DVD) of this performance is enclosed with this exegesis. (Appendix 3)

Starting with some project background, I will comment on the three productions from a chronological perspective. Some of the text will be material that I wrote during the creative process of each production and will be labeled as such.

***The Performing Hearts Project* – Background:**

In 1998, I devised *Von Wassermännern und Frauendarstellern* (On Aquarians and men who perform women) celebrating the 100th birthdays of Bertolt Brecht and Sergej Eisenstein. Both artists were born under the sign of Aquarius in 1898. In conducting research on their biographies, I realized that both of their deaths were caused by cardiac failure. In 1948, the great Soviet filmmaker Eisenstein died at 50, shortly after Stalin had banned his film *Ivan the Terrible*. Brecht died when he was 58, in 1956, just one year after he had received the Stalin Peace Prize in Moscow. My performance focused mainly on the fascination both artists/theorists had had for Chinese Theatre, and for the Chinese male actor Mei Lan Fang, who was a world famous interpreter of female roles in Peking Opera. I invited Peking Opera actress Shi Hong Mei

to Berlin and she performed a fascinating double disguise by playing a man who performs female roles.

On stage, a television-monitor showed the video image of a pumping heart. The footage was an x-ray film of an actual beating heart, which I had obtained from a medical researcher in Berlin. The original black and white had been colored by video artist and set-designer Merit Fakler, so that the image was blood-red.

Later that year, the same video footage was used when I staged *Baal* for the International Past Masters Conference in Aberystwyth in Wales. The Centre for Performance Research had organized the event and I worked with a group of university students on the production, which was presented during the conference. In preparing the show for an English speaking audience, I realized that there was only one English translation of the 1922 version of *Baal*, while I, as a German reader/director, had access to Brecht's five versions. Because the English version did not say anything about Baal's heart problems, I decided to project an image of the heart onto the ceiling of Baal's attic. While Baal was writing poetry and seducing women on an elevated stage immediately under the roof, his whole attic became this enormous red, pumping heart.

At the time, I focused on staging my artistic vision of the play *Baal* and left aside complications about Brecht and his development as an artist. My creation of the juxtaposition of Baal's cruel, heartless behaviour and the omnipresence of the blood-pumping organ in space was an intuitive artistic choice, not an academic one. When I started my research on Brecht's *Baal* and the heart in 1998, I felt no desire to write about it. It was the curiosity of the practitioner that drove me. But my interest in the connection between performance practice and research was growing. The Centre for Performance Research in Wales played an inspiring role here. Seven years later, I decided to combine my interest in Performance Research and my work as a practitioner with an academic career at a university. I began to develop *The Performing Hearts Project* and started with Brecht's *Baal*.

From scene work on *Baal* to *The Performing Hearts Workshop*

Before I started *The Performing Hearts Project* and its first practical exploration with my students at Edith Cowan University in 2006, I worked with these students on selected *Baal* scenes in semester two, 2005. We used the English translation of the 1922 version, which has no indication that Baal suffers from heart problems. The students performed scene by scene at the end of the semester in front of an audience. This experience proved very helpful when we started the 2006 workshop, because we had only fourteen working days for the research. It would have been impossible to achieve the same results, if the students had not already gained a good knowledge of the material.

It was also an important prerequisite for my research that the students knew the 1922 version of *Baal* through practical experience. From here, we were able to enter the textual and performative 'operation' that I had planned and which was the central concern of my research question: what would happen if I were to 're-implant' the heart into the body of text?

The following are excerpts from reflections that I wrote immediately after *The Performing Hearts Workshop* in February 2006:

The Performing Hearts Workshop (6-24th February 2006)

Working on *Baal* scenes in the context of the Contemporary Performance curriculum in 2005 had not allowed me to investigate the heart issue, whereas with *The Performing Hearts Workshop*, I was now able to focus on 'the heart of the matter'. I translated the 'heart attack scene' ('Baal's Attic') and re-implanted it into the scenic arrangement, which I developed during the first week of the workshop.

I wanted to radically change the original order of the scenes and had planned to start with Baal's death scene ('Hut in the Forest'), which is the second last scene of the play. Again I had to re-implant the heart issue into the English translation.... For *The Performing Hearts Workshop* it was important to bring the sentence "My heart is jumping away" back into the scene. Before Baal dies, the play describes his decline and the climax of his

downfall is the murder of his friend and suggested lover Ekart. When I realized the importance of this scene within the play, I decided to start from here and not from Baal's actual death.

– End of my “First reflections March 2006” –

The other strong theme for the Workshop Presentation on the 24th February was Baal's relationship with his female lovers. My decision to create a female chorus for the work on *Baal* and the importance of Ekart's murder scene to the play were inspired by a further study of Brecht's biography.

The female Chorus

In 1933 Margarete Steffin, one of Brecht's lovers and collaborators, wrote a poem in which she imagines Brecht on his deathbed (Steffin, 1991, p.199). In the poem, all his lovers come along and ask for their 'right' to make love with him while he is dying. It was this image that led to the creation of a female chorus in the *Baal* presentation: eleven women in black costumes attend a party, which is also a funeral, Baal's day of reckoning. His deathbed becomes the altar, a stage onstage and the site of a ritual of human sacrifice. The women are the driving force in this ritual. Waking him up, preventing him from falling into his last sleep is an act of female revenge, and an exploration of a male nightmare.

For the female chorus, we used Emilie's sentence from the 1926 version: “You don't even have a hole where others have a heart.” and Baal's response: “Rejected.” Not only the actress who played the character of Emilie, but all the women voiced this poetically powerful image. They created a strong opposition of a female chorus towards Baal. It was a statement of those eleven women, that they would not tolerate Baal's brutal behaviour any longer.

As mentioned, Baal's death scene was originally planned to be the beginning of our presentation, but after workshopping the script, a new dramaturgical structure emerged. The theatrical operation of re-implanting the heart into the body of text added another layer, which became an

investigation into the heart of a murderer. The female chorus at one point was a chorus of detectives, witnesses and reporters, memorizing and analysing this atrocious act of killing a onetime-friend. Ekart's last words before he is killed:

EKART: Why shouldn't I have women? Am I your lover? *Baal*
throws himself at him, chokes him.... (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 56)

Baal's murder of Ekart is the final turning point in the play. It is the beginning of Baal's definitive downfall. From here there is no return. Baal tries to 'shrug off this little matter' as he says shortly after the murder, but in the end Ekart's image returns, like a ghost. In all versions, shortly before Baal dies, he hallucinates:

BAAL: Mother, tell Ekart to go away... (Willett & Manheim, p. 60)

Baal has killed Ekart, but he cannot destroy the memories.

It is possible that Brecht repressed his own homosexuality and symbolized this repression with the projection of Baal killing his best friend and lover. Homosexuality was taboo during Brecht's lifetime. Although artists had more freedom than most to express their sexual orientation, it was risky to openly live it. Brecht must have been very aware that an openly shown homosexuality would have destroyed his career before it had really begun. It is likely that he had homoerotic friendships when he wrote *Baal* in 1918. Although, how far he went in exploring homosexuality or bi-sexuality is unclear.

In *Baal*, there is no situation where the two men openly practice their homosexuality. But there is little doubt, that the text implies that Baal has a physical and emotional love relationship with Ekart. Brecht writes in the scene, *Green Thicket. River*:

BAAL sitting in the thicket: The water's warm. You can lie like a crab
on the sand.... Ekart!

EKART concealed: What do you want?

BAAL: I love you.... I don't care for women any longer ... (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 47)

The following note in Brecht's diaries in July 1920 is very close to the above homoerotic love declaration in *Baal*:

In Possenhofen with Cas [Caspar Neher] in the afternoon. It is better with a friend than with a girl. We lie in the water (20° R) and in the forest and then in a boat, and then we swim again as it is already night At night one falls into bed like a ripe fruit: with lust. (GBA, vol. 26, p. 129)

Brecht celebrates his intimate friendships with other young men in Augsburg, but he makes a choice and focuses clearly on sex with women. The murder of Ekart can be interpreted as Brecht's escape bid from this ambivalence. But for Baal, the result is not liberation, it is a beloved one's death and it will lead to his own death.

By choosing the killing of Ekart to be the beginning of my workshop production, I was suggesting that the murder points right at the central conflict in Brecht's play. Baal kills somebody who is very close to him. So close, that he is somehow stabbing his own heart. He kills his lover to exterminate their love, to wipe out the heart connection like a weed. The murder can be seen as an attempt to kill his feelings. Baal's destructive energy is ultimately self-destructive.

2006 – A spectator's Impression of Baal: ...he came across 'with heart'.

I found last year's interpretation of Baal more as of a gross lusty lout who just happened to compose good poetry whereas yesterday he came across 'with heart.' Last year I did not like him one bit, yesterday I felt like an interested but uninvolved onlooker of him. (Personal communication, Spectator of the 2006 presentation)

The fact that *The Performing Hearts Workshop* Presentation with its new *Baal* adaptation made this audience member "an interested but uninvolved onlooker of him" was exactly what I was aiming for. This reaction showed that re-implanting the heart into *Baal* didn't mean necessarily breaking with Brecht's idea of 'distancing'. On the contrary, Brecht's 'heartless' Baal that we had performed the previous semester (2005) had

provoked a strong emotional response in our spectator's view. She "did not like him one bit" and this of course means that she had become emotionally involved, – something that Brecht wanted to avoid with his style of theatre: "The splendid isolation of the spectator will not be touched" (Schmidt, 1968, p. 101). But does that really work for the spectator watching the 1922 version of *Baal*? Baal is so egotistical and cruel that in most cases he provokes a strong emotional rejection in an audience.

The following is from text that I wrote in April 2006, regarding conclusions to The Performing Hearts Workshop in February 2006:

Baal Conclusions in 2006

It seems to me that Brecht didn't want to give his readers/spectators a chance to look at the 1922 Baal without a feeling of utter disgust. He makes a decision to eliminate autobiographical material from his first play. The effect is that Baal's evil side no longer has a counterpoint. As long as Baal is seen to be suffering from a heart problem, the audience can interpret his malicious behaviour as being counter-phobic in origin. Without the heart problem, Baal's behaviour is just an archetypal rampage; there is no legitimate reason for his destructiveness. It is the 'wild man' rebelling against domestication. However in 1954, Brecht still looks for a politically legitimate origin for Baal's criminal energy.

On looking through my first plays (ii):

Baal is a play, which could present all kinds of difficulties to those who have not learnt to think dialectically. No doubt they will see it as a glorification of unrelieved egotism and nothing more. Yet here is an individual standing out against the demands and discouragements of a world whose form of production is designed for exploitation rather than usefulness. We cannot tell how Baal would react to having his talents employed; what he is resisting is their misuse. Baal's art of life is subject to the same fate as any other art under capitalism: it is attacked. He is anti-social, but in an antisocial society. (Schmidt, 1968, p.110)

Brecht criticizes people for not being able to think dialectically, but he does not take into account that he might have created a character who does not easily lend himself to being examined from a dialectical point of view.

It is well documented that the work of Büchner had a significant influence on the young Brecht and was quite likely a source of inspiration for his early writings (Schumacher, 1978, p. 22). In Büchner's *Woyzeck* (written in 1836/37), the title character kills his wife, Marie. The play, which is based on an actual murder case, premiered in November 1913 at the *Residenztheater München*. Woyzeck stabs his wife when he learns she has been having an affair. He hears a voice in his head, telling him to stab her. But his hallucinations and the brutal killing have other reasons than just jealousy. As part of a scientific experiment, a doctor forces Woyzeck to eat only peas for weeks, and pays him for daily urine samples. Woyzeck needs the money to support Marie and her baby (Büchner, 1996, p. 21-23). Thus this character can be seen as the victim of an antisocial society. Baal resists the misuse of his talents, as Brecht says, but he is not a victim of an antisocial society in the same way as Woyzeck and therefore his criminal behaviour cannot be explained as such.

The following excerpts are from the proposal for my project for the Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth, BEAP 2007, which I wrote in 2006:

Proposal for BEAP 2007 on the theme of "Stillness"
Performance Title: "The Performing Hearts Solo"

The traditional definition of an actor is that of a man in action. An actor in search of stillness will most probably be in conflict with the expectations of his audience. Stillness in theatre seems to be the biggest risk a performer can take.

I want to go beyond traditional theatre dramaturgy, which touches only the surface of the phenomenon of stillness, and look at the human bios itself on stage. In that context, two connected life processes that work within our bodies are of particular interest to me: breathing and heart beat. Normally on stage the heart is used as a metaphor, as an image for emotions. I want to break this limitation and start from an investigation into the heart's organic function and its performative potential, which does not exclude an emotional dimension. While breathing is an external exchange with the environment

and as such is recognizable to a spectator, the heartbeat is an inner process unnoticed from the outside.

A body on stage kept in stillness for a long time provokes the spectator's speculation as to whether it is alive or dead, and whether it is human, a puppet or a sculpture. This moment of speculation is the starting point of my research, which confronts the traditional sculpture representing a human body in stillness and confounds expectations with the actual living body of the performer presenting sculptural stillness. The heart in its silent running represents the essence of stillness, a real life process and an independent creative power. (End of proposal excerpt.)

The solo performance took place from September 11th until 21st (UNESCO Peace Day) in 2007, in front of the Art Gallery of Western Australia. For most of the performance I was sitting on a bench, connected to a small medical device that amplified my heartbeat. Beside me was a shopping trolley containing three T.V. monitors. The first of these showed a beating heart (the same footage was later used in the 2008 performance of *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*). The second monitor had video images of myself performing with and at the Brecht sculpture in front of the Berliner Ensemble, and the third showed footage of another sculpture, also in Berlin, *Der Rufer/The Caller* (calling for peace). By chance, *The Caller* (as a memorial for torture victims) is also installed as a replica in front of the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

The following reflections were written in October 2007:

Performing Hearts Solo – some reflections

The Performing Hearts Solo was planned as work in progress towards the final doctoral production of *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*. My original dramaturgical concept for the final doctoral production had three parts:

Prologue: Heinrich von Kleist's – *On the Marionette Theatre*

Middle (main) Part: Bertolt Brecht's – *The Journey of the God of Happiness*

Epilogue: My own – *Performing Hearts Solo*

The important technological elements that I was using during the Performing Hearts Solo should have been further developed for the bigger ensemble production. Those technological elements were the amplification of my heartbeat and the use of video footage of a beating heart and images from Berlin.

In September 2007, the UNIMA production *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* was actually planned to take place at the Perth Cultural Centre and logistically it would have been possible to integrate the sculpture of “The Caller” into the performance. The decision to take another venue shortly after was not the only reason why the original idea of an integration of the solo into the ensemble production did not work. But from this moment onwards, these two parts of a work-in-progress drifted apart and now looked like two separate projects under the same umbrella, titled: *The Performing Hearts Project*.

The other main reason why I finally separated the UNIMA production from the BEAP solo work was the fact that a performance in three parts would have been extremely difficult to manoeuvre with an ensemble and a crew of students. There were concerns about the size of the production right from the beginning. As the artistic director, I tried to push the boundaries as far as possible, knowing we would face them anyway sooner or later.

– End of Performing Hearts Solo –

Final Doctoral Production: *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*

This production was based on Brecht’s play fragment *The Journeys of the God of Happiness*. The Australian premiere was presented at the World Puppetry festival UNIMA 2008 (Union International de la Marionette).

Initial plans with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre:

Originally it was planned that I would present two different productions during the UNIMA festival in 2008. The first was to be a new adaptation of my Kleist Solo “On the Marionette Theatre”, which I had performed in

Germany in 2000. The second was the Australian premiere of Brecht's *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. Both productions referred to the UNIMA festival theme *Journeys* – but on two very different levels. Later I decided that the Kleist text could function as a prologue for my adaption of the Brecht fragment.

In 2006, I wrote the following proposal to Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, the Australian organizer of the UNIMA Festival 2008:

Excerpt from my proposal:

One of the key arguments in Kleist's text as to why the movements of the puppet have more grace than those of any human being (even of a trained dancer) is that we as human beings have lost our innocence. According to Kleist, this occurred with the development of self-consciousness. This led to a separation from the pure state of being and was intensified when we developed the ability to think.

Such mistakes, he added rather curtly, have been unavoidable ever since we ate from the tree of knowledge. But paradise is locked and the cherub is behind us. We have to make the journey around the world and see if there is perhaps an opening again somewhere at the rear. (Kleist, 1980, p.11)

Kleist's "journey around the world" is a journey of the human consciousness through infinite space and it almost sounds like he has foreseen the ideas of Albert Einstein, when he suggests that we will get back to where we have started from – entrance through the back door of the infinite mind?

Brecht's God of Happiness does not travel that far. "This god was to arrive from the East after a great war" and the poor people who are not already on their journey to paradise (after being killed) have probably more urgent needs than an infinite consciousness. Brecht's idea of happiness is very much down to earth and as a Marxist he was convinced that our consciousness could not travel for long on an empty stomach.

Kleist searches for the grace and innocence that we have lost from splitting our existence into logos and bios. Brecht encourages his audience

to overcome the capitalist class division. In my opinion both are heading for a utopian 'Garden', where we will find the tree of knowledge again:

would we have to eat again from the tree of knowledge in order to revert to the condition of innocence? To be sure, he answered. That is the last chapter in the history of the world.
(Kleist, 1980, p. 16)

The human being at the end of a long journey will unify the image of the puppet and the God and become immortal. Finally the traveller will eat from the 'Tree of Life', which is at the centre of the Garden of Eden. The God of the Old Testament wanted to avoid this human triumph and this is the reason why Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise. The New Testament gives hope with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but to get into the Christian Heaven one has to die first.

Brecht and his God of Happiness do not believe in a life after death, believing instead in the immortal urge for happiness that unifies all humans who suffer from oppression and exploitation. If the workers, the oppressed, are able to rise against the owners of the means of production and take over those means, they will cease to be 'puppets'. In this metaphorical cutting of the puppet's strings, they, in a way, will also unify the image of the puppet and the God – the human being in control of his own destiny.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there is little hope for a One World – One Heart – Evolution. Since 2001 September 11th became a symbol for hate and terror and while a Cold War had only recently ended, a War on Terror began. And after these two wars will the God of Happiness come down from his cloud again? Will his mission be still the same? That "the human urge for happiness can never be entirely killed!"

– End of the 2006 letter to Spare Parts Puppet theatre –

Working with students in Second Semester 2007

The production developed over a time period of eight months. Starting in August 2007, I had the chance to introduce students first to the art of puppetry and later to Brecht and the Happy Buddha project.

Training with Michael Barlow and first puppet making

During the first eight weeks of the semester, Michael Barlow, artistic co-director of Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, gave a weekly three-hour workshop to the 2nd year Contemporary Performance Students. This group was to constitute the ensemble for *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* in first semester 2008. Barlow is an experienced puppeteer and puppet theatre director and was the ideal partner for this period of the project's preparations. His emphasis was first on training the physical skills of puppeteering. Playfulness, endurance and specific movement skills were the prerequisites needed to work towards animating puppets and objects.

While parts of the physical training were familiar to me, there were other training elements that focused on specific puppeteering skills and it was essential that I had somebody supporting me in this area. I had no practical experience in that field of performing arts, except an early interest in object theatre during my acting studies in Berlin during the 1980s.

Barlow introduced new material to the students by fragmenting the puppet body. A Styrofoam ball with a hole for one finger was the first body part to be animated. The head indicated the different directions of looking. A head goes walking, running, jumping. These were the first tasks for the students. Step by step, the exercises became more complex and inner, emotional reactions had to be made visible through moving the Styrofoam ball. The performer's body was the connection to the stream of life, which had to be channeled into the inanimate object. Even the smallest movements of the wrist, the elbow and the shoulder joint of the right and left arms had to be made conscious. It was mesmerizing to watch how the finest nuances of the player's movement brought a specific expression into the movement of the puppet, which could trigger a potentially clear emotional response in an audience.

For eight weeks, I had the luxury of being the spectator of the training. In front of my eyes, the countless facets of a puppeteer's profession unfolded. Diverse materials, from a sheet of paper to a puppet skeleton were animated and came to life, often in the most touching way. Sometimes, the

puppet had the shape of a human body, but this was not the secret of its strong effect. A crumpled sheet of paper could suddenly start breathing. It could laugh, cry, become hysterical, angry and happy. The simplicity and the focus on the essential expressions of life was the convincing power of the puppeteer's work. This was something that I wanted to captivate in my work as a director and I knew that I had already learned something from the emerging puppets.

When I took over from Barlow in the second half of the semester, I also started each rehearsal with a physical training. My focus was mainly on working with and from the centre of gravity and I had Heinrich von Kleist's text "On the Marionette Theatre" in mind, together with my experience in Meyerhold's Biomechanics. The fascination of the 'actor as a super-marionette' that Gordon Craig had written about, guided me in training the students. I asked a lot from them. They had learned a range of completely new skills. For the first time, the students had a chance to get more than just a taste of the puppeteer's profession. For the production that I was planning, they had to be both puppeteers and actors (a reminder of the image of the puppet who cuts his own strings and thus becomes both puppet and God).

Establishing the connection between the performer's body and the puppet was extremely important, as was the need to make a clear difference between the two. How does the performer present the human body on stage and how does this same performer animate the puppet's body? Sometimes the performer's body became a visible partner for the puppet on stage. Sometimes the performer's body had to become 'invisible' in order to direct all attention towards the puppet. Those specific questions were tackled again, when we had a workshop intensive with Barlow at the end of the semester (November 2007).

Puppet-Making with the whole ensemble in February 2008

Prior to the first week of rehearsals, we worked again with Barlow, mainly focusing on puppet making. From the previous semester, we already had the puppet skeletons, which would be used in the war scene and we had the prototype of a biblical snake for the prologue. What we needed were four

life-size prospector puppets, a three dimensional 'Happy Buddha' and eight of what we called the "cut out Buddha" or two-dimensional Happy-Buddha-shaped cut outs, which were to symbolize the multiplication effect of the human urge for happiness. The whole ensemble of performers helped to make these puppets and, by the end of the week, all the puppets that we were to use in the performance were ready for rehearsals. For the students this development was of great importance, because they had to get used to the specific challenges of being a puppeteer as well as creating specific characters for the puppets and for themselves. Being involved in the making of the puppets also gave them a better understanding of working as a puppeteer in the show.

The following was written in March 2008, preceding the performance:

Journeys of the Happy Buddha – UNIMA 2008

I will trace some of the decisions made over the course of devising the production and relate these to practical matters which arose during rehearsal, as well as to the co-existent work on: (A) the text fragments; and (B) the related theoretical research and secondary literature relevant to the production. This latter includes Heinrich von Kleist's famous essay *On the Marionette Theatre* (1811), which will be used in a prologue for *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*.

Brecht was reacting against the "Sturm und Drang" tradition in German literature when he struggled with heart, pain and happiness in his writings on *Baal*. For the German Romantics, words such as heart, love and friendship were used often and even men were encouraged to show tears of happiness or pain. Heinrich von Kleist is strongly influenced by the romantics and so the combination of a Brecht text and a Kleist text is also an investigation into the 'heart of the matter' of German literature in the last two hundred years.

I had learned from the experience of the 2006 workshop and performances of *Baal* that my decision to re-implant the heart into the text had not been misguided. In my opinion, both the visual 'implantation' in the form of the video footage and the textual 'implantation' of the word 'heart'

appeared to add to the performances. It had the effect of adding another dimension to the performance, and did not seem superfluous or gimmicky. This opinion was supported by audience responses such as the one quoted earlier, which describes the 2006 production as 'with heart', and compares it favorably with the 2005 production (which contained neither the visual nor the textual 'implantation'). This gave me confidence that a similar 'implantation' exercise would work for my adaptation of Brecht's *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. And so I proposed the following research question: is the play fragment *Journeys of the God of Happiness* the right body of text to try the 'implantation' of the missing heart? I hoped that this 'implantation' would again add dimension, depth and meaning to the production of my adaptation, *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*.

Brecht likened Baal to a 'hamster with eternal intestines'. Baal's heart in comparison was weak and had to be excluded from the text. *Journeys of the God of Happiness* was based on the same idea as *Baal*, but the entire fragment does not mention the human heart once. My aim was to revive the image of the heart in the adaptation of the fragment – a 'theatrical-surgical treatment' to reinstall some vital autobiographical and psychophysical connections Brecht had made in his first two versions of *Baal*.

I became aware during my research that Brecht had indeed implanted some of the decadent and self-destructive elements of *Baal* into *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. The teachings of the God were at first purely egotistical and he promoted the concept that one should do everything to gain individual pleasure. However, Brecht's political and ideological journey, after studying Marxism from around 1926 onwards, caused him to become more focused on the collective needs of the masses. He had understood that the human urge for happiness was a powerful drive that could be very useful if channeled into the right (in this case left) direction. As mentioned earlier, the God of Happiness had to be educated by one of his human followers, in order to understand the message that happiness could only be achieved collectively. Individual heart issues and personal psychosomatic problems were no longer important for Brecht, and, as with any of his autobiographical material, became taboo. This would not have at all allowed him an

implantation of Baal's heart into *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. The morbidity of Baal's heart did not fit the image of the vital urge for happiness that he wanted to use in his new play. While Brecht evades mention of the heart in the text, I prepared its implantation through the character of the rebellious follower. I had planned originally to leave Brecht's Marxist message of the play intact. I intended only to add a dimension to the human urge for happiness, the power of the collective heart.

The following was written as immediate reflections on the production May '08:

Journeys of the Happy Buddha – the development of the script

After receiving permission from Suhrkamp Verlag to use my own translation of *Die Reisen des Glücksgotts* for my doctoral project, fears that Brecht's family would restrict my artistic freedom were relieved. Changing the English title from *Journeys of the God of Happiness* to *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* was the other strategic move to avoid problems. Finally, I made sure that all publications stated that our production was based on Brecht's play fragment. It was never said that we would perform Brecht's play *Die Reisen des Glücksgotts*.

The fact that Brecht finished only two scenes of the planned play made his text fragment a quarry through which to excavate ideas. We could have either filled in the gaps, meaning that we would have tried to finish Brecht's fragment or we could have radically played with the aesthetics of this potential quarry of ideas and created our own version. In the end, I would say that we developed a third way, which meant that we didn't just fill in the gaps but built our own textual road for a "journey around the world". I never had the intention to write a script for "*Journeys of the Happy Buddha*" myself. First of all, I am not a playwright and if I would try for the first time to conquer this new field of artistic expression, I would not try to be the posthumous co-writer of Bertolt Brecht. However, he was never a coward with using the ideas and work of his collaborators. For example, as Fuegi states, "When challenged in 1929 to account for songs by other hands he had included in *The Threepenny Opera*, Brecht pronounced in a Berlin newspaper his own

‘fundamental laxity in questions of intellectual property’ ...” (Fuegi, 1994, p. xiii). I therefore had no scruples about using *Journeys of the God of Happiness* as material for a devised collaborative production.

Brecht’s play fragment *Journeys of the God of Happiness* was not at all easy to read. With only two finished scenes and quite cryptic notes for the other scenes, there were few indications of how a particular scene could have been built. The chances to come up with associations were endless and, at the end of 2007, it was necessary for me to work with my dramaturgical assistant towards the development of a script.

The first draft of the ‘Happy Buddha’ script was the result of several dramaturgical sessions. It was clear from the very beginning, that Kleist’s text *On the Marionette Theatre* could be used to create a prologue. The venue that I chose for the performance of the prologue was Perth’s Government House Gardens. I believed this to be an ideal venue because Kleist’s dialogue between ‘Mr C’ (the dancer) and the storyteller takes place in a public garden. Subsequently, the two scenes that Brecht had finished for *Journeys of the God of Happiness* could be performed on the adjacent veranda of the Perth Concert Hall. The scenes – *A messenger visits the God of Happiness on his cloud* – and – *The God of Happiness gives an apple to a farmer* – were the first two pillars on which the dramaturgical concept was built. To achieve more stability, we needed a third pillar. This was the execution scene, which Brecht had not written but for which he had given enough information as to how the scene could be constructed. Also very important was the fact that Brecht had made a direct connection between the unsuccessful attempts to execute the God of Happiness in the play and the play’s conclusion: “the human urge for happiness can never be entirely killed”. The dramaturgical framework for *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* was therefore:

Prologue:

On the Marionette Theatre by Heinrich von Kleist

Core scene for the beginning:

A messenger visits the God of Happiness on his cloud.

Core scene for the middle part:

The God of Happiness gives an apple to a farmer.

Core scene for the end:

Futile execution-efforts.

Those scenes functioned as a scaffold upon which new ideas and associations could be built. It was not an attempt to finish Brecht's play *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, but to invent *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*, a new creation inspired by and based on Brecht's fragment.

From Kleist's essay On the Marionette Theatre to Biomechanics

The image of the marionette in theoretical discussions on acting techniques is probably more often associated with Edward Gordon Craig's text *The Actor and the Übermarionette* (1908) than with Kleist's essay *On the Marionette Theatre* (1810). Craig's position was that the actor cannot control his emotions and therefore cannot generate ideal artistic material for the theatre (Craig, 2002, pp. 159-166). The provocation that the actor therefore had to be replaced by the *Übermarionette* is most likely the reason why the echo of his somewhat confronting text can be still heard today. Kleist's text is not as polemical and, yet, it still has much to contribute to the topic of actor's training and what we can learn from the marionettes on stage.

Kleist compares the moment where thought intrudes upon impulse for a human actor, with the human loss of innocence. In looking at the origins of this loss, he draws some very interesting comparisons with the book of Genesis from the Old Testament. He surmises that in our evolution, humans, having eaten from the tree of knowledge, have interrupted the flow of what, referring to Diderot, I would like to call 'natural impulses'. Kleist then sends the actor on a "journey around the world" to hopefully re-enter the lost paradise through the backdoor.

This 'around the world' trip should not be taken literally. The journey is to be taken by human consciousness, passing through the infinite. Due to a phenomenon that Kleist compares to the disappearing and returning of a reflected image in a concave mirror, consciousness would then arrive back at

its beginning. We would find ourselves again under the tree of knowledge and eat again from the forbidden fruit. The marionette (the unconscious mechanical body) and the divine infinite consciousness would meet at a crossroad of this epic journey. However, in his essay, Kleist's focus is not so much on the arrival in paradise, but more on the loss of innocence and how it shows in the movement of the performer, in this case a dancer. Kleist's astonishing suggestion is that a dancer can learn about grace from a marionette – and also from a puppeteer. To better explain why he sees a puppet without consciousness as superior to a dancer with consciousness, he gives several examples and, amongst others, tells the story of a young man fencing with a bear. The animal is superior because it does not think and consequently reacts faster. The bear moves from its centre of gravity and therefore cannot be beaten. The young man has lost the directness of acting on impulses. He has lost, according to Kleist, his innocence.

The conflicts and traumas resulting from this loss of innocence can be well understood by anyone who has trained in either acting or dance. Thinking about and analysing “natural impulses” can stifle those impulses and consequently all physical actions and movements on stage. Kleist's text gives advice, as to how we can actually work on that problem. Like the marionette or the animal, we should ‘accept to be moved’ from our centre of gravity, because that is where “natural impulses” are generated.

Kleist does not explain life as a purely mechanical phenomenon. He looks at where the mechanics of the body and the vital living impulse can become one in an artistic expression, providing we do not disturb this intimacy with the loud voice of our reasoning mind. And, of course, he is very aware that the marionette, which he praises, lives only through the impulses given to it by the puppeteer. In my understanding, this comes close to the idea of incorporating the living impulse of nature (spontaneity) into the technical and structural work of an artist. One could argue that this is a fundamental principle for the creative development of a performer. An understanding of the mechanical side of acting is as necessary as it is to ‘accept to be moved’. What I am advocating here could be seen as a kind of “Einfühlung” into the ‘centre of gravity’ of a puppet or of oneself. It is

important to not translate “Einfühlung” as empathy here. I am suggesting that “to feel into one’s centre of gravity” is not about emotional identification with a character (represented by a puppet or by oneself as an actor). It is what Kleist calls “the path of the soul of the dancer” that the machinist or puppeteer has to follow, after putting him/herself into the centre of gravity of the marionette.

Kleist uses another very effective anecdote in his essay, *On the Marionette Theatre*, which helped my student performers to understand the connection between the process of acting and what the bible calls ‘the loss of innocence’. A young man has just done a particular movement and associates it with a famous sculpture. When asked to repeat it, he is incapable of doing so. Trying in vain to capture the same gracefulness of the sculptural stillness in his action, he mechanically copies his initial movement and from here onwards loses all the natural charm of his youth. How to repeat an action with the same living impulse that had driven the action when activated for the first time, is one of the fundamental questions of acting technique.

The performers in *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* had to be actors and puppeteers at the same time. They had to understand the mechanical principles working in their own and their puppet’s physical construction and how this could be applied to stage work. The great technical and artistic challenge for them was to animate the puppets through living impulses, which meant to project themselves into the centre of gravity of the puppet-body. Thanks to our collaboration with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, the students were trained in the basic techniques of the puppeteer. I then had to provide them with an acting training that was complementary to what Michael Barlow had taught them.

Eisenstein, who had been a student of Meyerhold, suggests in his memoirs that Biomechanics can be seen in direct connection with Kleist’s text *On the Marionette Theatre* (Eisenstein, 1987, p. 464). I had researched, trained in and later taught this psychophysical actor’s training since 1988 and agreed completely with this remark. Biomechanics was therefore the ideal actor’s training for our production.

“I see the bear – I run – I feel fear” – Meyerholds Biomechanics

Following the ideas of reflexologists such as James and also using the discoveries of the soviet scientist Pavlov, Meyerhold arrived at a biomechanical understanding of how to produce emotions in his acting technique (Law & Gordon, 1996, p. 36). He believed that the internal work of emotional identification was artistically unreliable and could even be dangerous for the actor's mental and physical health. Instead he proposed that an actor's movements were a safer and more reliable way of triggering emotions. The system of biomechanics can therefore be understood as a way of accessing and regenerating the actor's original natural impulse, through working from their centre of gravity. This reveals a fundamental connection between Kleist's essay *On the Marionette Theatre* and Meyerhold's Biomechanics.

In Biomechanics, finding the centre of gravity in each stage-movement is captured in the Russian term *otkas*, for the preparation phase of each movement. This first segment of a whole movement would be executed in the opposite direction to that of the intended movement, accumulating the energy needed for the specific action. From here the *posyl*, the 'sending' or 'execution', would follow as the next phase. The release of the accumulated energy into the intended direction would be driven from the performer's centre of gravity, if a proper *otkas* had been achieved.

The third and final segment, the *stoika*, means fixation. This can be likened to Kleist's image of the sculpture, when talking about the young man's loss of gracefulness. Although Kleist focuses on the young man's repetitive movement (*otkas*, *posyl*), there is a connection with the term *stoika*. The young man's intended goal is to arrive at a point that is reminiscent of the sculpture's aliveness and gracefulness. Through finding the *stoika*, the actor should capture the artistic mastery of the sculptor. In Meyerhold's Biomechanics, the actor is artist and artwork, sculptor and sculpture at the same time.

Meyerhold's statement, the "actor is artist and artwork" at the same time, is also of importance in connection with Brecht's assertion "The actor is

in fact standing on stage as actor and play-character at the same time” (GBA, vol. 25, p. 580). Brecht continues, “and this contradiction must be found in his consciousness; it [the contradiction] makes the character truly alive. Every dialectic will understand that” (Ibid).

I see another parallel between Biomechanics and Brechtian rehearsal and acting technique: The *otkas-posyl-stoika* segmentation and what has been described as a ‘three phase rehearsal process’ in Brecht’s work with actors (see pp. 20-21, Chapter Seven). This rehearsal process of three phases, which in short meant:

1. distancing (standing back) from the character
2. moving from distance to identification
3. then back to distance (from both the text and the characters)

This is similar to the segmentation in Biomechanics:

1. *otkas*- preparatory movement into the opposite direction to the intended goal, creating a distance and accumulating muscular energy.
2. *posyl*- moving from the opposite into the initially intended direction. This segment is being ‘in the action’.
3. *stoika* – is translated as a moment of fixation/immobility as the finalization of the *posyl*. Just before this actual fixation, which is in general positioned in the direction of the initially intended direction of the action, there is a little bounce back, a ‘micro-distancing’ I would call it.

The following quotations illustrate how the three-phase rehearsal process can be likened to the *otkas*, the *posyl* and the *stoika* of Biomechanics:

“this collecting process [*otkas*: accumulation of energy into opposite direction] proceeds slowly until it nevertheless takes a leap [*posyl*: being ‘in the action’] – until you leap into the final character, unite yourself with it”. (Brecht cited in Rouse, 2002, p. 258)

During [the third] phase the actor, having come to identify with the character...examines it once again “from outside, from the point of view of society,” [the ‘bounce back’ of the *stoika*] and attempts to recapture the “mistrust and astonishment of the first phase”... (Rouse citing Brecht, 2002, p. 258).

I also see a parallel between the Brechtian style of acting in performance and the *stoika* segment. This is in the tension created between the ‘fixation’ and the ‘bounce back’ aspects of the *stoika*, whereby the moment of fixation can be likened to being ‘in character’ and the ‘bounce back’ is comparable to the distancing from, in order to comment on, the character. Additionally, like the Brechtian actor who performs not just one, but many transferrals from identification to distancing in the course of one performance, the actor in Biomechanics uses numerous cycles of the ‘*otkas* – *posyl* – *stoika*’ segments.

My translation of theory into practice in regards to my above insights took the form of, as I have said earlier, focusing on the use of Biomechanics as the primary actors’ training technique during the rehearsals for our production. As I will explain below, I did not use up valuable rehearsal time in discussion of these theories, but rather used my theoretical insights to inform and strengthen both my teaching and directing processes.

During the rehearsals for *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* I also did not want the actor to get self-conscious in a way that he/she would get caught up in questions of psychology. I know from my own experience as an actor that the apparent interest in talking about the psychology of the character can have a negative effect. An actor can neither be in character nor in the moment when thinking about what the hidden motivations of his character might be. “Stanislavski, we remember, responded to the problem [of the actor’s self-consciousness] by insisting that his actors put action before language. Similarly Brecht, influenced by Stanislavsky’s student Meyerhold, the director from whom he had borrowed as well the idea of using placards in the theatre, declares in rehearsal, ‘ Don’t tell me, show me’” (Mitter, 1992, p. 52).

In our rehearsals (18th Feb - 4th April 2008), I conducted a regular warm-up, based on Meyerhold's Biomechanics and combined those aspects of actors' training with further development of the students' puppeteer skills. Rehearsals on specific scenes were informed through this skill-based warm up, but I did not want the performers to think about their training during artistic processes. If there was a specific technical problem regarding acting or/and puppeteer work, I organized training sessions either with Barlow or myself to solve the problem/s through specific exercises.

The puppet as an ideal training tool for Brechtian theatre

Although it was a challenge for my students to learn these new techniques, working with puppets was an ideal training tool for Brechtian theatre. The request 'to present a character rather than to be in character' became a physically clear instruction, when animating a puppet. It was also clear that in keeping a certain physical distance from the puppet, one should never lose touch with it. Watching puppets 'in action' reveals immediately whether the puppeteer is 'in it' or not. Because the puppet-action is happening on a physically visible level, there is, ironically, no way for the puppeteer to hide behind the puppet. In the case of our production, the puppeteers were always visible and sometimes had to alternate between acting and animating the puppet. The task 'to present a character' worked for them in both cases. They had learned inadvertently about Brechtian theatre and acting, through their puppeteer training. The transitions from one technique to the other, as well as swift changes from one character to another enhanced their flexibility as performers and gave them a better understanding of what Brecht wanted an actor to be able to do on stage.

The ideal complement to working with puppets in our acting training was found in Brecht's suggestion to achieve distance by speaking the text of one's character using the third person:

In order to help actors maintain [a] type of questioning attitude ... towards the actions and remarks of characters ... Brecht suggests ... using the third person (not 'I did ...' but 'He did ...') (Mumford, 2009, p. 67)

One could say that, similar to animating a puppet in front of one's body, one should animate the character and therefore distance one's self from it. Through using the third person, the moment of distancing would happen in regards to the text first. The consequences that this would have on a physical level, were of course more subtle than the obvious distance one would see between puppet and puppeteer. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental change in the physicality of an actor if he presents a character or identifies with it:

As a writer I need an actor who can completely empathise and absolutely transform himself into the character ... But at the same time and before all else I need an actor who can stand away from his character and criticize it as a representative of society. (Brecht cited in Mitter, 1992, p.50)

Conclusion on Brechtian acting technique in the *Happy Buddha*

The above commentaries focus on aspects of the performers/puppeteers' skills, and how working with puppets enhanced the ensemble's understanding of the Brechtian acting technique. However, whilst in rehearsal for this production, I never attempted to make the rehearsal room a laboratory for the study of how Brechtian acting technique interacted with my theories on the role of the heart in Brecht's plays. To do so would have been problematic, as Brecht did not leave behind a comprehensive system of actor training exercises. As Mumford states:

Given Brecht's passionate commitment to changing the way theatre is made and received, his relative silence on the subject of practical exercises is indeed remarkable. While he was a prolific commentator on his aims, preferred models and collaborative stagings, he was far less voluble about aspects of preparatory training such as the nurturing of the performer's expressive skills. Rather than developing a comprehensive system of tasks and activities, like Stanislavski, or innovative psychophysical *études*, like Meyerhold, Brecht focused his energies on ways of interpreting and staging the events of the play and their social significance. (Mumford, 2009, p. 130)

For our production we needed a preparatory training that helped to enhance the performers' expressive skills. Due to the fact that Brecht did not systemise and write much down on this topic, I had to look at his role models'

training methods. To meet the aesthetics of a performance that used puppetry as a major artistic element, the Stanislavski system was not the appropriate acting technique. Meyerhold's system of Biomechanics was more promising for preparing the performers' bodies for the quite demanding combination of acting and puppeteering. Once the actors in my production began their training in Biomechanics, the quality in articulation of their gestures clearly improved. When playing the dual role of performer and puppeteer they needed to, as Meyerhold demanded, move as sculptors and sculpt at the same time. Through being confronted with this challenge, they achieved something that Walter Benjamin describes as a specific quality of Epic theatre:

'Making gestures quotable' is one of the substantial achievements of the epic theatre. An actor must be able to space his gestures the way a typesetter produces spaced type. This effect may be achieved, for instance, by an actor's quoting his own gestures on stage. (Benjamin, 1996, p. 76)

For the actors working on my production this was particularly useful because it also inspired their work with the life-size puppets they were animating.

The 'in and out heart' of the Happy Buddha

I will now elaborate on how the implantation of a heart into the text of *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* was managed. At first, it was not revealed in the performance whether the Happy Buddha had a heart and the heart image was introduced in another way. The body of the Happy Buddha puppet was painted gold and we used this symbolic colour in one of the songs composed and written for our production. A young man is 'searching for a golden heart' and sings about his urge for real love. He is not happy with having to pay with gold to get some attention from the bargirls, with whom he and his brothers spend the evening. Everybody laughs at him. His brothers and the bar girls see love as a commodity and happily agree on an exchange: gold for sex. But they cannot trust each other, because each of them tries to cheat the other and their business treaty ends in fraudulent exchanges. In the end neither of the brothers gets what he wants.

When they meet the Happy Buddha later, it is the heart-of-gold-seeking brother who criticises the god, for giving drugs to his followers and allowing them to look only for their personal gains. Instead, he proclaims that happiness is something that has to be achieved through effort and that everybody has to contribute to this challenging process of achieving happiness. He has no success. The other followers become wild and aggressive, they drink and play cards, gambling their lives. Card playing was one of the motifs taken directly from the fragment and it can also be found in *Baal* (Willett & Manheim, 1998, p. 13) as well as other works of Brecht, such as *Mahagonny Songspiel* (GBA, vol. 2, p. 325).

As mentioned earlier, the search for a golden heart was not part of the text fragment, *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. Introducing this image was a dramaturgical operation through which I implanted the heart into the body of text of the performance script. Brecht in fact wrote that the Happy Buddha initially pushes the follower who criticized him out of his group and later realizes the importance of his criticism. He then asks him to come back and admits that he had made a mistake in sending him away. For me this was the point where the heart that was longing for love and justice could be connected with fighting for political change and building a better society. The idea that feeling hearts and active hands were needed was not alien to Brecht, as his 1951 poem *Song about Happiness* suggests:

So let your hands work busily
Put your heart into it
As happiness must be earned
It won't just come on its own (GBA, vol.15, p. 255)

In creating the heart-of-gold-seeking young man as the one who is critical towards the God of Happiness, I was making a link with Brecht's remark in the original fragment about some new followers: "They know new paths to happiness, organize a new type of struggle for happiness." Brecht did of course not mention the heart here, but as I knew from the *Song about Happiness*, there was an admitted link.

Brecht clearly illustrates the God of Happiness' resilience in the execution scene. The Buddha finds the poisons that are given to him delicious; his head swiftly grows back when cut off; and he dances and frolics as he dangles from the gallows. This scene was, in fact, initially one of the main reasons why an exploration of *Journeys of the Happy Buddha* had been deemed possible, and even attractive, in the context of a puppetry festival. But this moment of stylized horror, which could have been exploited, using the chicanery of puppets and various visual effects, finally proved most effective in its simplicity. In the centre of the stage, the Happy Buddha could be seen marching on the spot, occasionally dancing, whilst a performer who was costumed as the Statue of Liberty announced the various methods of execution via a microphone. The Happy Buddha repeatedly found reason to laugh, and his round and golden belly quaked with joy in this game of execution. The followers who had travelled with him, however, were human and the brutality of the death penalty did not leave them untouched. The Happy Buddha's unyielding power of life represents the impossibility to "suppress human's need and desire for happiness." His mortal followers, however, had to pay the price for each execution in human lives.

Staging these human deaths by execution, although not mentioned in Brecht's fragment, seemed necessary in order to prevent any anachronistic revolutionary romanticism that might otherwise have arisen at the end of the performance. Brecht had noted in 1950 that he had discovered the end for *Journeys of the God of Happiness*: "Happiness cannot be killed. Happiness is: communism." However, with the failings and inhumanities of the Stalinist regime having been uncovered after Stalin's death in 1953, Brecht's statement, "Happiness is: communism", was not tenable in our performance. Of course Brecht had realized what "The well-deserved murderer of the people" had done to them and commented in a poem in 1956, "Whoever becomes a God, becomes stupid" (*GBA*, vol. 15, p. 301). But this did not stop him from believing that there was no alternative to communism.

Brecht's *Glücksgott*-fragment does not explicitly refer to the USA as part of the journey, but it seemed justified to locate the execution scene in the land of 'limitless possibilities'. This historic reference to Brecht's exile in

the United States resonates with his questioning before the Committee on Un-American Activities in 1947.

Brecht also wrote a critical poem about the presence of US military in Europe in 1951/52. It was in the early years of the Cold War era and Brecht saw the USA as the original aggressor. The poem finishes with a clear statement about how Brecht assessed the power of the North Americans: “You only give hope to the vultures” (*GBA*, vol. 15, p. 257).

Additionally, the geographical transposition of *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*, ending with his execution in the US, enabled a contemporary reference to the war in Iraq, the torture of prisoners and the abuse of power – characteristic of America’s government under George W. Bush the second.

The Statue of Liberty welcomes the Happy Buddha to the land in which striving for happiness is, after all, enshrined in the constitution (although woe betide anyone who questions the status quo or who actually attempts to reorganize things). What happens to the Happy Buddha once “Mister President” and the henchmen of the US economy have consulted one another has already been described. But when it emerges that the Happy Buddha cannot be killed, the “Economy” makes the following proposal: “let us smelt his golden body and thereby isolate his immortal heart. We will mint handy candy coins with the gold obtained and his heart will become the central pump of our great American factory of happiness.” Mr. President briefly questions whether the radical heart of the smelted being would be compatible with a capitalist happiness industry, but he is quickly assuaged by the enormous self-confidence of the Economy. “One World – One Heart – One Global Market” is their battle cry, which soon resounds across the globe. On the backdrop, a video projection of an enormous beating human heart pumps red light into the theatre space, and a dozen two-dimensional golden copies of the Happy Buddha move towards the audience in a mechanical dance as the Happy Buddha slowly fades into the background. This is the end of the Happy Buddha. What remains is an immortal heart that no longer beats on the left, but which has become a central component of the mechanism that is commonly described as the free market.

I was surprised myself about the outcome of the heart implant. It led me to wonder whether perhaps Brecht was right to be wary of the heart. Could it be so fickle and easily misused? However when, in the performance the Heart of Happiness was hijacked by capitalist industries, it also became apparent to me that it is not the heart itself, its metaphorical idea and conception that causes trouble. Once it was isolated it had lost its wisdom and became merely a mechanical pump.

Conclusions on the ‘in and out heart’ of the Happy Buddha

At this stage it is salient to ask the question of why I put the heart into the workshop production of *Baal* and my adaptation of Brecht’s text fragment of *Journeys of the God of Happiness*. At the very beginning of my research, the answer to this question would have been: because it was missing. I still believe that the simplicity of this answer has value. It points in the right direction. From here I had to find out why the heart is missing from these texts: my hypothesis was that Brecht had not taken it out of the 1922 version of *Baal* just by accident. I believe he also did not leave it out from the *Journeys of the God of Happiness* merely because he forgot about it.

Although there is a connection between the two plays, I have to distinguish between the heart Brecht extracted and the one he did not ever implant. While *Baal* (from 1922 onwards) was missing the weak heart and the cramps that its creator had originally given him, *Journeys of God of Happiness* did not get a human heart with its full range of emotions. Therefore the human heart worked as a ‘humanizing factor’ in my production of *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*. Brecht also wanted to break with the idea that his God of Happiness is infallible and has nothing in common with those creatures he looks after. In fact, it is the critical follower who teaches the god a fundamental lesson: happiness at the expense of others is immoral.

With *Baal* “the young Brecht makes a first extensive attempt to renounce the traditional moral code” (Vaßen, 1994, p. 53) and with *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, one could say that he tries to balance the basic human urge for happiness, with the need for moral restrictions within a collective. In the play fragment, he does not mention the word communism or

heart. But while he deals with the concept of communism – as we can see below – there is no such reference to the heart:

Having assembled a diverse group of disciples he [the God of Happiness] draws the wrath of the authorities when some of them begin to spread the idea that the farmers should own their land, that the workers should take over the factories and that the workers' and farmers' children should capture the schools. (GBA, vol.10.2, p.1258)

The fact that “he [the God of Happiness] is arrested and sentenced to death” points out that Brecht emphasizes the revolutionary struggles here. As a young man, he asked himself how one could become impervious to individual anxieties? As I discussed in Chapter Five, he developed a type of imperviousness attained through a social sensitivity, a kind of sensitivity for the collective. Brecht felt that the heart was not reliable enough for the revolutionary struggle that needed imperviousness. But the human heart cannot be left out of the picture when dealing with the human urge for happiness. Admittedly this basic emotion has more than one spot in our anatomy where it makes its presence felt, but the heart is surely one of them. It is my opinion that Brecht found this difficult to accept. I am not talking here about Brecht's physical heart problem, although I believe that it is always the background for those issues. I am talking about the heart as material for social and political metaphors. Because Brecht is talking about revolutionary struggles in *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, the heart seems to be taboo. After the revolution, when a new starting point is needed, he suggests in his poem *Song about Happiness*, that when building a new and better (socialist) society, one has to put one's heart into one's busy hands.

However, the following example shows again that Brecht is contradictory when it comes to the subject of the heart. It seems that he also sees the heart as a humanizing factor, something that is more fundamental than class conflict. He writes in a poem in 1952:

NOT FOR THAT WE HATE EACH OTHER, we have a heart /
not for that we kill each other, we have hands. / But that we
mutually help each other / to carry the burden of an arduous and
fleeting life ... (GBA, vol.15, p. 262)

If Brecht had not have given up on his plans to create “a repertoire play with a universal theme”, *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, maybe he would have implanted the heart into it himself? I think this is a legitimate consideration, when we look at the above quotation. But of course it is speculative. I had to find a more definitive basis for my research and therefore I implanted the heart into my production. Unwittingly, I had implanted the human heart that got hijacked and seduced by capitalism. In this way I was able to reflect on a historical process that occurred some decades after World War II, a historical process that Brecht could not have foreseen – the downfall of the Eastern Bloc. The majority of East Germans welcomed this development and even demanded the change during rallies that led up to the fall of the wall in 1989. Besides the deprivation of human rights, such as freedom of speech, it was the frustrated consumer impulse that caused them to wholeheartedly wish for the end of the economy of short supply. For a political playwright today, it is important not to ignore this impulse. The general idea of what causes the feeling of happiness is very much connected to images of a consumerist society. Only through being alert to the fact that capitalist industries have hijacked the heart of happiness, is there a chance to show that our hearts can wish for something more than a full shopping trolley.

Conclusions

“I force myself to logic, because I have so little of it in me” said Brecht to Manfred Wekwerth, who was one of his young assistants at the Berliner Ensemble in the 1950s (Schütte, 2008, film interview). Wekwerth also reports: “Brecht, after all had an incredible fear of catatonia [apparent death]. He therefore demanded that his heart should be stabbed with a stiletto after his clinical death” (Lahan, 1999, p. 86).

My conclusion is that Brecht, “the Classic of Rationalism”, only appeared as such because he was rigorously controlling what he perceived as his irrationality. This fear of losing control derived from his weak heart and the heart cramps that he described in his diaries between 1913 and 1921. Undoubtedly the symptoms, which were similar to those of a heart attack, would have felt life threatening. When he assured himself in 1916 that he would not yet die and wrote in his diaries: “I command my heart”, his fear of death was by no means banished. The battle went on for another 40 years, until his fatal heart attack in August 1956. However, his anxiety did not paralyse his creativity. On the contrary, he produced a prolific amount of work. Even at a glance, the sheer quantity of his writings is impressive. His forty full-length plays, extensive theoretical works and volumes of poetry are all proof of how productive he was.

Being an atheist, Brecht could not assuage his fear of death with the promise of an afterlife. It seems he became obsessed with attaining immortality through material means precisely because he believed that achievements in his current life offered him the only chance of making an enduring mark. The dialectical materialist needed a material form of immortality and what better way for a writer to ensure his remembrance than in the form of published works?

***Baal* and Death**

In the 1918 and 1919 versions of the play, Baal's uncompromising egotism and his aggressive behaviour appear to originate from an awareness that life could end at any moment. In psychoanalytical terms, this 'counter-phobic' behaviour is one of the possible patterns of reaction of someone suffering from a heart neurosis (Pietzcker, 1988, p.13). When Brecht eliminated this autobiographical element from the 1922 version onwards, Baal's egotism and destructiveness were missing a dramaturgical counter-weight. His behaviour could no longer be viewed and understood from another point of view. The way he treated people could only be seen as evil. In 1954, Brecht was still trying to find a politically legitimate origin for Baal's destructiveness and described him dialectically as "anti-social, but in an antisocial society." Later, however in the same note he wrote: "I admit (and warn): the play lacks wisdom" (Schmidt, 1968, p.111).

Heartlessness and compassionate love seem to be another conflict in Brecht's writings on Baal, indeed, in the very conception of this character. The source of this conflict was probably personal and, at the same time, went far beyond the boundaries of Brecht's own life. As a writer he was confronted with a cultural and political reality that raised serious doubts about the survival of the concept of a romantic and the compassionate heart in the 20th century. The First World War, with 17 million dead and the historical processes following the 1917 Russian Revolution, were not the backdrop for any romanticism, whether political or artistic. I would like to suggest here that for Brecht the alternative for an obsolete heart might have been the materialistic idea of happiness, as he for example formulated it in *Journeys of the God of Happiness*.

Hiding and camouflaging as coping mechanisms

There is no doubt that the early confrontation with the possibility of a premature ending of his life influenced Brecht's work and, as an experience, was inseparably linked to the creation of material such as *Baal*.

By decoding camouflaged autobiographical elements in his work and relating this process to his aesthetic and political choices, I have suggested that Brecht did not fully repress the ongoing heart problem. He still dealt with it, but in a hidden way, which must have created a particular friction in sense of selfhood. The statement about the artist Delacroix, “He had a hot heart, beating in a cold man”, which resonated with Brecht, might describe this friction in its very essence. This opposition created energy and the use of it could be seen as Brecht’s life strategy to make his anxiety productive.

The early ambivalence that he had developed in his relationship to his mother made it very difficult for him to make interpersonal decisions, especially on an emotional level. Mother and son were extremely close and illness was one of their strong bonds. Brecht’s first diary in 1913 and letters from the same year, where he describes staying together with his mother at a health resort, leave no doubt about their mutual dependency. The central conflict of the adolescent fighting for his autonomy from the beloved sick mother must have been tormenting for both sides.

Writing became an addiction for Brecht, because it was one way to deal with his painful inner conflict. To be almost all the time in intense human relationships was the other addiction that kept Brecht’s neurotic energy flowing. This worked, but it was not a healthy life style. He had to find another long-term strategy to deal with this conflict. Marrying Helene Weigel and studying Marxism were the two decisions made in the 1920s, which appear to me as his survival strategies for a more balanced life as “a cold man with a hot heart”. This made it possible for him to continue his exhausting balancing act without having to analyse the origins of what was restlessly driving him. The conflict was of course still causing extreme contradictions. The husband Brecht was “faithful to too many women” as Helene Weigel described him, and the Marxist Brecht had his proletarian-style designer fashions handmade from silk, a personal preference that he kept a guilty secret, as Ruth Berlau remembers (Pietzcker, 1988, p.192).

I am aware that there have been several attempts to denigrate the world famous writer by emphasising certain unfavourable aspects of his personality. Best known is probably John Fuegi’s book *Brecht & Co.* (1994),

in which he accuses Brecht of exploiting his female collaborators by claiming their writing as his own. A controversial publication like this was able to gain a lot of attention with its release four years before the 100th anniversary of Brecht's birth in 1998. A decade into the new millennium, such provocations would perhaps not have such a strong effect. To keep the legacy of the artist alive, Brechtian research needs to be balanced, not overly combative nor dry and dispassionate. The most crucial question is probably how scholars and educators are to introduce the artist to new generations of readers, audiences and students of theatre and acting.

Brecht in education

My work with Brecht is as a lecturer as well as a practitioner. In both of my PhD-productions, *Baal* and *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*, I was working with student-actors. The theatre students of the present will become the practitioners of the future. I therefore believe it is especially in education that we need to address the question of which Brecht we are talking about. The sheer quantity of artistic and theoretical work that Brecht produced throughout his life can be overwhelming for students and teachers alike. The unfortunate result is that Epic Theatre is often over simplified and when it comes to acting Brecht's work, students tend to be taught that they must not connect emotionally with their designated character. The following quotation from the University of Southern Queensland (Threepenny Opera Teachers' Notes, 2009) typify this tendency:

The acting techniques utilised in Brecht are very different to those we are used to in the theatre and film of today. Most modern acting is in the naturalist tradition, that is, actors try to be as true to life as possible in their portrayal of a role. Brechtian acting is quite different. The actor is intended to have no emotional connection to the character (...) they demonstrate the actions of a character, without ever 'being' the character. (para 10)

However, I advocate that students need to know more about Brecht's complex position towards emotions. In my experience as a teacher/director, I have found that informing them about his heart neurosis has been beneficial because the idea of 'distancing' is thereby perceived as a personal strategy

on Brecht's part to deal with overwhelming emotions. Distancing thus becomes more than a rule that must be followed in order to create the correct form of Brechtian acting. Instead, distancing becomes a practical tool to contain rather than deny emotion.

It is not only Brecht's position towards emotions that needs to be clarified in the classroom. Another urgent concern is the mistranslation of the *V-effekt*, as I discussed in Chapter Five. It needs to be understood that the best translation of *Verfremdung* is not 'alienation' but, as Mumford has proposed, 'defamiliarization'. I believe this will help in bringing both the teaching of Brecht's theories and the staging of his plays closer to the writer's ideas.

Brecht's last years

However, it must be acknowledged that some of the misunderstandings regarding Brecht's theoretical works have to do with his own way of articulating them. Maybe because of his many years spent in exile, without much of a chance to direct, some of his texts lack practical correspondence. Towards the end of his life, Brecht was much more willing to admit to this tendency to underestimate the value of practice. In 1954, in a discussion with students and professors at the Universität Greifswald Brecht said about his programmatic text, the *Short Organum*, "one mustn't think of it as if there were someone with a specific conception of theatre that he wants to impose at all costs"¹⁸ (Rouse, 2002, p. 248). In the same scenario two years later, he re-affirmed: "What I've set out in the *Short Organum* is only valid to a certain point". He continued with "Theatre takes place on the stage" (Schoeps, 1989, p.186).

I see these comments as a revision of a process that had begun with him rewriting *Baal* in 1919/20: the shift from heart to head as 'commander'. Towards the end of his life Brecht suggested an alternative approach to theatre that had to do with astonishment and discovery. Although this was

¹⁸ "Über die Arbeit am Berliner Ensemble," in Werner Hecht (ed.) *Brecht im Gespräch, Diskussionen, Dialoge, Interviews*, edition suhrkamp 771, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 1975, p. 123. (Translation John Rouse)

never going to be a reversal of the before-mentioned shift, it is possible that head and heart would have found an equally strong position in Brecht's new aesthetic category of the "intuitive naiveté" (Schoeps, 1998, pp.186-198).

Brecht died at 58 of a heart attack, but what led to this collapse was an inflammation of his pericardium, the tissue that holds and protects the heart. This had become infected, a painfully sharp metaphor to describe his destiny. A tragic chain of misguided medical advice and Brecht's restlessness in working on his 'artistic immortality' (publishing of his work) sealed his fate. But the truth is, he did not have to die in 1956 (Schulten, 2000, pp. 5-8).

In writing *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, Brecht did not want to include any heart issues, when it came to a situation of extreme tension, like the revolutionary struggle of the God of Happiness. The head needed to be in control and thinking had to lead the way out of a crisis. For Brecht it seemed to be the best strategy if he did not pay too much attention to the heart, neither in his writings nor to the heart in his chest. For many years this strategy worked and the fact that he does not mention his heart cramps after December 1921, might give the impression that the problem was perhaps solved. It is not uncommon that people who suffer from a heart neurosis don't show the symptoms to the same degree of severity in their later years, but this does not mean that the psychophysical conflict is over (Schulten, 2000, p. 7).

In Brecht's case I have found evidence that another health problem existed, which may have taken more of his attention after 1921. This may also have become part of his strategy not to focus too much on his heart and on his fear of another panic attack. Just a month after he noted for the last time in his diaries that he had a heart cramp, he wrote: "Last days of January [1922]. Suddenly I pee blood" (*GBA*, vol. 26, p. 269). In a letter sent from Denmark: "Sygehus Svendborg, the 23. 6. 34 – The delivery [of the first of the three books of "Dreigroschenroman" (threepenny-novel)] has delayed a bit, because a painful kidney disease forced me to go to the clinic" (*GBA*, vol. 28, p. 421). One could say the kidney problems were camouflaging Brecht's heart problem, but those problems ultimately affect the heart.

This has been further elucidated in an email-conversation that I have had with Dr. Gavin Lambert on the subject of Brecht, his heart and his kidneys. I asked him on the 29th of September 2010:

What is your opinion about the connection between heart and kidney disease? Brecht writes in his diaries about his heart cramps until 1921 (he was 23) and then suddenly stops mentioning them. In 1922 he writes about serious kidney problems. In 1934 he has to stay at a clinic for some weeks because of a kidney problem and it is an inflammation in his kidneys in 1955, which leads to his death in 1956. A bacterial infection of the kidneys affected his pericardium, which was not diagnosed correctly. He finally died of a heart attack, but the inflammation of the pericardium is seen today as the real cause.

Reply from Dr. Gavin Lambert:

Perhaps without realising it you are touching on a very important issue – one that is emphasised by the fact that patients on renal dialysis often die of heart disease rather than their kidney condition. Similarly, in patients with heart failure a number of physiological factors are predictive of mortality and morbidity, an important factor being the patient's renal sympathetic nervous activity. My (German) nephrologist office partner often states, "the heart is only there to pump blood to the kidney".

The reason why the diseased kidney is important in regulating/impacting on the heart is the fact that renal afferent nerves (nerves that lead away from the kidney) project to the hypothalamus. The diseased kidney activates these renal afferent nerves, which in turn activate neurons in the brain that in turn "excite" the heart (leading to unstable heart rhythm/damage/failure ... an unfavorable cycle is initiated). (G. Lambert, personal communication, 1st October 2010)

The heart and its cultural context

To include Brecht's heart problems within scholarly discussion allows us the chance to come to a new and clearer understanding of his works. However, it is not only his psychophysical problem that is of interest here. The heart plays such a central role in world literature that we cannot ignore how Brecht deals with its culturally significant metaphorical and symbolic function. We have to be aware that it was difficult for him to stay objective

with this issue. He was simply too affected by the real heart in his own body. This created for him a particular friction between language and physicality.

Heart metaphors in languages around the world suggest that the heart is the source of emotions, especially love. It has also been described as the seat of the soul. The word 'heart' is a placeholder for many human qualities, both negative and positive. As a metaphor it is a fundamental part of our language and constitutes as such a central function in our human search for identity.

Brecht did not want to extradite the "children of the scientific age" to an almighty heart myth that had been dominant, especially in German literature since the Romantics. As an artist of the word, he had picked up on a cultural and sociological conflict, which perfectly matched with his personal psychophysical problem. The 20th century paradigm of science dominating human life, as described in an anatomical metaphor, meant that the head should rule over the heart. This matched with a life strategy that Brecht had chosen out of an inner necessity, for reasons of a personal, emotional nature. He might have felt that there was a price to pay for using this strategy, when he wrote: "the conjectures of the old philosophers about the human split become real: in the form of an horrific illness, the split between thinking and being within a person" (Beyer, 2008, p.141).

The split between thinking and being is Kleist's major issue in his essay "On the Marionette Theatre". This split can be likened to the binary opposition of mind/body as is discussed in more recent discourse. What is missing to close this gap between body and head is most likely a heart, – one that is "the seat o' the brain" (Shakespeare) and not its ruin. A heart that we do not have to 'command' like Brecht thought he had to, because we feel we can trust in its beat. This heart, that brings peace into our lives and ends the torturous restlessness, is a placeholder for something that we cannot find and therefore it leaves us with an "urge for happiness, that can never be entirely killed."

To talk about 'head, heart and body' is not to evoke a magic spell by which to re-enter paradise. Maybe we have to eat from the tree of knowledge

again as Kleist suggests? Maybe we have to keep the pips of the apple to plant a new tree, in order to beat hunger, as the God of Happiness suggests to the farmer (Appendix 1). Only one thing seems certain. We have not found the 'tree of life', which is at the centre of the Garden of Eden and which makes one live forever. Ultimately our heart will jump away one day and we will face the gap between being and not being. Even if paradise cannot be found on the one or the other side issues about an afterlife will still be asked and misused by manipulative clerics of every colour. Brecht's work will be an important reminder that we should live our lives to the full and not wait for heavenly pleasures, but enjoy the earthly ones here and now. Nevertheless, the same Brecht, will change the tone of his 'voice' and remind us, that our individual happiness should not come at the expense of others. And of course he is right both times.

21st century outlook on heart and head

At the beginning of the 21st century, revisions of the dichotomies that separate the heart and the head, the irrational and the rational, the body and the mind need to be explored. Medical scientists have started to understand the complex interplay between brain, heart and psyche. However this research is still in its early stages and we will have to wait and see when those new findings will be offered to a wider audience of non-specialists.¹⁹ Whether it will be possible to integrate those new interpretations into our use of language is a question that cannot be answered at this stage.

In the meantime we should study the heart myth of the past and how it is still valid. Today we mostly meet the heart metaphor in its bastardised form, for example on Valentine's Day. The heart symbol is often used as an incentive to stimulate the desire to buy gifts for a beloved person. In general, the desire to buy, to possess a certain product, easily finds a way into the hearts of modern consumers. The flow of money represents the flow of blood in our global economy and the heart is a mighty mechanical pump in this

¹⁹ Understanding of heart function and its integration into the neuronal network of the brain is perhaps no less novel for psychosomatic access than Harvey's circulation model was in his time. Even today we lack details for a new image of the heart, but its outlines are already recognisable. (Strian, 1998, p.111)

anatomical metaphor. This was my scenic conclusion in *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*. The Heart of Happiness was hijacked by capitalist industries.

Brecht had big hopes for the resilience of the God of Happiness. He described him as immortal and maybe this was the reason why the word 'heart' was not once mentioned in the fragment. Brecht had reconfigured his earlier anatomical metaphor for the ideal play, which needed "intestines, lungs and a heart with blood in it". During the 1940s, we see this in the God of Happiness, whose 'low hanging testicles' mark the close connection of earth and pleasure, an indication that the energy of the "hot heart" had shifted to the body region that represents the vital power of sexuality. This new anatomical metaphor lacks what is universally believed to be the location for humanitarian impulse. Empathy, usually connected to the image of an open heart, is generally seen as the motivation behind the desire to be good to one another. Brecht obviously had difficulties with using this common concept. If the heart was the original and main source for the good in mankind, the door to his theatre would have been open to idealists, romanticists – people with all kinds of irrational tendencies. Given that he was fighting to control his own irrationality, this would not have been acceptable to him.

Political solidarity was a much more useful concept for Brecht than the image of a compassionate heart. The former represented the idea of collective action, in order to change society. Compassion appeared more as an individual act of helping others who needed relief from their suffering. However, in his *Song about Happiness*, 1951, Brecht says that the heart needs to be included in the building of a better and happier society:

So let your hands work busily
Put your heart into it
As happiness must be earned
It won't just come on its own. (*GBA*, vol.15, p. 256 f.)

The socialist Germany where he was living from 1949 until the end of his life had the potential for him to become this place. But he was more reserved with his hopes, than for example his writer colleague, Johannes R.

Becher, who wrote the national anthem and was a kind of state poet for the GDR. Becher's poem *The laughing heart* is an example of how the 'leftwing heart' re-enters socialist literature:

You ask, why our heart is laughing?
It was such a long night,
Then we saw a light, far, far –
The light was shining through the night.
(Becher cited in Hollmer, 1997, p. 53)

Becher's conclusion in the poem's last verse is that the heart laughs, because finally the people have the power and are able to liberate themselves. The heart that liberates itself from the darkness of the past becomes the laughing heart. This recalls Brecht's numerous references regarding the dualism of light and darkness in *Baal* and the connection of this dualism with the heart. However, in *Baal* this is not a political metaphor, as it is with Becher. But for both, Becher and Brecht, I argue, this imagery derived from a common source in the human subconscious. Those archetypal images could help us to understand and maybe overcome the dualisms of head/heart and light/darkness (Jung, 1978).

A new view of Brecht

Theatre can benefit us both individually and collectively if we make it "a place of experience", as Brecht suggested. If head, heart and guts are involved in a balanced way, political theatre in the 21st century might be able to reinvent itself. If we are present in our performance work, embracing the diversity within us and around us, our audiences are more likely to also engage with head, heart and guts. This will not immediately change the whole world for the better, but I believe that it will at least make a difference. It is questionable whether theatre can help us master the world and ourselves, as Brecht was hoping. The "attempt to master change" as Mumford says, is probably a more achievable goal. Although, we might have to accept, that change is our greatest master.

The political theatre of the twentieth century was, by definition, ideological. It demanded that audiences took up one of two clearly defined, and often polarised, political positions. However, the conflict between the two major political-economic ideologies, communism and capitalism, is not as relevant now. Our theatre must be adapted to a new historical situation. As graffiti on a bridge in East Berlin in 1990 announces, "Capitalism didn't win, it's just what we have left." In my practical research, particularly in my work on *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, I have searched for ways to not only implant the heart into the text fragment, but also into my developing ideas of a contemporary political theatre at the beginning of the 21st century. My scenic conclusion for *Journeys of the Happy Buddha*, that the heart of happiness was hijacked by capitalist industries, does not sound like a message of hope. But it is also not a statement of surrender. I would like it to be seen as a way of connecting with Brecht's realistic attitude and his approach towards realism in theatre. His 'invitation' to his audience: "Don't stare so romantically", is particularly valuable when presenting the human heart to them. We should have no illusions or esoteric assumptions that the heart knows all the answers to our burning questions. But we simply cannot ignore heart and emotions in their interaction with the head and thinking. We have to look at the brain-heart interaction instead of separating the two. Empathy is an emotional quality of the heart, which can be seen as a generator of political change. Empathy can cause indignation and lead to rebellion. And although a head-driven solidarity has lost most of its ideologically driven powers today, it could experience a renaissance. If solidarity is deeply connected to impulses of empathy and indignation, it is hard to break. Fundamental political changes cannot be initiated by rationalist thinking nor stirred by wishful hearts. Real change needs head and heart inter-*action*.

Finally I would like to at least mention a source for Brecht researchers that I have not been able to explore, because it has not yet been published. What I have found out about it is so promising, that I would like to round up my conclusions with reference to the future publication of this anticipated research treasure: Brecht's note-books in which he documented his working

process between 1918 and 1956. These fifty-four mostly small in size, individual items are held at the Brecht Archive in Berlin. Although their editing will take years, it is already clear that the complete edition of these notebooks will change the general public image of the world famous writer, because it shows a much more contradictory Brecht. While there is new material in it, which has not been published before, much of it has already been used for Brecht's collected works. However, the fundamental difference in editing the complete edition will be that there is no filtering and categorizing of the material in order to fit it into a suggested editorial system. It will be pure Brecht, in his diversity, rawness and contradiction, a literature workshop, where writing is in progress and not brought to any closure (Beyer, 2008, pp. 140-143).

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Appendix 1

Journeys of the God of Happiness by Bertolt Brecht

Translated by Kaya and Ralf R  ker with the friendly permission of Suhrkamp Verlag. This translation is for use only in this doctoral study.
Taken from: *GBA*, vol. 10.2, p. 922 – 937

A1

1	Salesman	Art
2	Bee-keeper	Sex
3	Traveller	Possessions
4	(Solidarity)	Friendship
5		Success
6	(Telling the truth)	Social Activity

A2

Prelude

- 1 The gift of an apple
Possessions
- 2 The God of Happiness meets a soldier
- 3 The Bee-keeper Women

God of Happiness (bringing Marie) "About the seduced girls"
Lust

- 4
The Trumpet
Salestalk and Musical Lessons
The father suffers from an inexplicable sickness
The great (expensive) doctor
"I am cheap"
Funeral march
Art – to give

5
Success
The rich man
The daughter goes with the God of Happiness
Car?
Success

6
The fugitive farmer
The pious woman bee-keeper
The God of Happiness gets others to serve him and pay for him.
The God of Happiness in the car
"I am the God of Lowliness", 7th Song

7
Truth
The deficiency disease
The great doctor
Mission

8
Solidarity
The God of Happiness fries a steak for the women
(Car)
Friendship

9
The God of Happiness gives his disciples drugs (Schnaps?)
(Car)
Intoxication

10
The warning
The rich man (5)
The great doctor
Security

11
The betrayal
"And thus I travel only heavily,
disguised and underground
and awaiting my time."

12
The trial

13
The warders
The warders want freedom
The God of Happiness lets them go, promises to stay

He makes the superintendent happy (He betrays the warders)
Freedom

14
The execution

A3

The Journeys of the God of Happiness

The God of the democracies (they fall, when he is angry)

Invited by the rich. They cannot enjoy anything. He whines about the wastefulness. Goes into the kitchen.
He becomes illegal, pursued, hidden.

The grass, which enjoys the rain

He is to be executed. One can hear him laughing about the accusations of long-lasting oppression. Finally the executioners come out exhausted. He was immortal. He smacked his lips when drinking the poison, stretched out in the chair.

With the materialists

With the washer-women

A4

He portrays Chance as

1. *Baker*, who bakes better bread for the workers (Taste)
2. *Shagger*, for the washer-women down by the river (Sensuality)
3. *Salesman*, with the trumpet for the child (Study)
4. (Success)
5. (Security)
6. *Friend* (Love)

(4) can be about beauty, the happiness of the sales assistant and the buyer of beauty. (3) about the happiness of music and of parents' happiness at giving.

The God of Happiness drives in an old car across the land (destroyed by two wars). He has some students who keep him. As a sign of his appreciation he personally dedicates menus to them ("as a memento of a good meal"), photos of expensive women and so on.

A5

The defiant student

One of the students is outraged against the master and accuses him of selling drugs and condoning crime.

The God of Happiness throws him out, as he wants to rob those striving for happiness of their freedom and drive them into wars full of casualties or into hard work.

Later, however, the God of Happiness realizes that he has rejected his best student and embraces him.

A6

The God of Happiness has no morals. He only teaches mankind to do everything he can to achieve happiness. How they are to become happy, he doesn't know. His students are also the murderers and robbers, the whores and the tyrants.

But now new students appear. They know new ways leading to happiness, organize a new kind of struggle for happiness. The farmer needs land, but also the cooperation of all farmers. The worker the factory and the planning and so on.

Productivity is called the greatest happiness.

A7

About the non-ageing of the dead.

Advice to the sister, to put a band-aid on her forehead

The God of Happiness reads the faces of the dead.

He who was born too soon.

A8

The God of Happiness tries to make individuals happy, i.e. to attract new followers. The outcome is crime. All happiness comes at the expense of others' misfortune.

Then he receives proposals from the rich. He is to work only for them.

The poor, on the other hand, always want happiness for everyone.

Thus they are his true congregation.

He announces his program:

Land to the farmers

Factories to the workers

Unlimited production

He is immediately being pursued, taken to court, executed, but he cannot be killed.

A9

The God of Happiness considers only those who manage to be productive in their own way to be happy.

A student formulates the program.

B1

Song of the God of Happiness

Friends, when I cast the dice for you
It happens, that I shudder
For the bad one needs nerve only
But the honourable needs fortune.

And, as it is, in my profession
I have to hurry
Put out your hands:
I cannot dispense anything into a hoof.

With my poor vision
I often donated to the phoney
Wine, white bread and meat dishes
were wasted on the fellow.

I slave away, until I pant and sweat
But cannot make him happy
Provide the spiciest of jokes
But he can't laugh.

Just between us: I like to side with
The restless spirits
Grinning, present them with a rotten egg
And then I find my master.

Oh, I love to deliver
A ship and not just a port
Friends, tolerate not only no master
But also no slave!

Friends, I will then make enjoyment out of tribulation
And becoming scars out of wounds.
Yes, the impertinent ones, they
Are my favourite clients.

Friends, I'm a cheap God
And there are so many expensive ones!
When you sacrifice the grapes from the pot to them
To me you sacrifice merely the acidity!

B2

Seventh Song of the God of Happiness

Friends, if you devote yourselves to me
And it could be worth it
Realize, that you will no longer will be tolerated
In the upper regions!

For the Gods of reputation and rank
Have in any case
Banished me, the little fat one that I am, once and for all
To the pigsty.

And no self-respecting little parson
Ever recommended me to his punters
Whoever only so much as stretches lasciviously
Is immediately called up for confession.

Whoever thinking of me, smacks his lips
Whoever demands a cushion for his bed
Whoever scratches himself in certain places
Will be ordered to leave the good persons' home.

Whoever is delighted by a well-rounded bottom
What are the earliest matins to him?
Whoever bends down low to things of the flesh
Cannot be saved.

And a piece of meat and a roof over one's head,
Is that what man is born for?
A good life? Heaven swears revenge
to the poor blighter.

.

A smile alone can be obnoxious
Laughter is always suspicious!
Whoever doesn't reach for the stars, is a pig
Whoever laughs at that, is vile.

I am the God of Lowliness
The palate and the testicle
For happiness, sad to say, lies
Rather close to the ground.

B3

Second Song

Sonny, get yourself a noose
And forget your worries.
What yesterday was fate to you
Tomorrow is coincidence.
For thousand years the dew fell
Tomorrow it will not appear.
Stars enter an old house
Indistinctly.
Big stays big and small stays small
That much I still know.
Small ones no longer arrive
But big ones might.
Ride confidentially
On the spray streaked torrent:
Highs are glorious everywhere
And lows are horrible.

B4

Third Song of the God of Happiness

When the bride had finished her beer
We went outside. The yard lay dark.
Behind the loo it stank
But lust was strong.

When we were sitting inside again
Amongst the crowd, old and young
I sang: under the green grass
There is too little diversion.

B5

Eleventh Song of the God of Happiness

When the woman screamed under the axe
When the man screamed on the wood
It happened on my, the God of Happiness's, advice.

Be artists, moribundi!
With the aeschileic cry
You might succeed.

B6

Before me go the cannons
Behind me trucks full of loot
But loud stomach rumbling shows me
That even here people still live.

And as long as stomachs still rumble
Then there are admirers for me
And from where he, the teacher walks
The first muttering can be heard.

B7

I am the guardian God of ploughmen and sowers
The teacher of the pickers, the teacher of the mowers:
The frothing milk, the fragrant bread
Grapes and pears were what I offered.

B8

Love Lessons

But, lass, I recommend
A hint temptation in the shriek:
Fleshly I love the soul
And soulfully I love the flesh.

Chastity cannot lessen lust
Full of hunger I would love to be well fed.
Love it, when virtue has an ass
And an ass has virtue.

Since the God rode the swan
Many a girl became scared
Even when she relished suffering:
He insisted on a swansong.

B9

- By those who hurt
Not to hurt
Thanks to the suspending
Eternal laws

The cities are uninhabitable

Service unaffordable

Passing delayed

During the short intervals
I was Master.

B10

- If one only makes an effort
A tiny "if you please" makes
Even a battleship democratic in a flash
And so his cousins, aunts and Pomeranian think.

A neat one and what's more a Christian
Is the always pious son
As a genuine democrat
Meaning honest and upfront
He demands a civil tone.

B11

Loneliness of the God of Happiness
(He is cold: only 15 million people for him!)

SONG OF THE GOD OF HAPPINESS
(When his followers go to war)
What will they eat?

How many will return?
Which time will they lose?

Against the small pleasures
(Modesty)
He throws up, if only they "get something out of them all".

B12

ENTRANCE OF THE GOD OF HAPPINESS

When the God of Happiness began his song
When the believers in the God of Happiness came together

B13

II

And wherever he passes, both fertility and at the same time
Famine prevail.

B14

PROLOGUE

THE GOD OF HAPPINESS RECEIVES A REPORT ON THE WORLD AND MAKES A PLAN

High above the clouds the God of Happiness receives a messenger.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Messenger, with the scorched wings
Welcomed to the hills of the clouds
What kind of fire bit you?
Before you hurry to the greater Gods
Let the lowest know something as well!
Who will know of it, if you stay here a little while?
Tell me how my affairs stand down there?
Are my disciples still the old ones?
Is the God of Happiness suitably respected?
And are my temples well maintained?

MESSENGER

Your temples look like dens of vice.
Organ music long ago gave way to money burring
Whores come and go, and pissheads holler
And the opium eaters are lying rigid
Your disciples are the card players
Stockjobbers, gamblers on horses
From the striving after happiness of many
A few become happily fatter.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

But that has nothing to do with me!

MESSENGER

Some clerics claim that.
They sell entrance tickets to five paradises
At enormous prices:
One only has to await one's death.
Thus for many, living in the cellars

You are living in the highest regions.
The smile of their dead shows them
As their muscle straightens during the cramp
That they finally have sighted you
And are well fed by your spiritual bread.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

But up here one does not need it!

MESSENGER

And down there one has stones.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Yes, it seems that way, seeing the world
How it endeavours in the glow of fire
Of eternal wars, spinning in vain
To free it of itself burden of ticks and stooges
And I believe
It's time, after so many years of leisure
That I should now descend to Earth.

B15

THE GOD OF HAPPINESS GIVES AWAY AN APPLE

Dawn. A ragged farmer is standing in front of a cottage, which has been shot to pieces, when the God of Happiness passes by.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

It's dawn.

FARMER

So what?

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Nothing then. If you like it like this.

FARMER

What are you looking for here?

GOD OF HAPPINESS

I'm not looking for anything.

FARMER

That could, for example, also be me.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Don't you know me? Look at me!

FARMER

I can only see that you have two coats.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Friend, it is cold.

FARMER

I am aware of that, I am cold.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Then get some slats to make a fire.
There is a forest over there.

FARMER

That is right: it is not here.
And for the trip I could do with a coat.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

A mug of warm beer warms one best.

FARMER

Nowadays the rats live the longest.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

That means: learn from them, my friend.

FARMER

Sure.

However, one needs rats' teeth for biting.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

If you knock out mine, you will still have none.
The joy wouldn't be too big.

FARMER

Still it would be a small one.
Us stupid country folk
Don't see enough joy.
War or peace
Makes no difference to us.
What their canons miss
Their taxes eat.
The grain goes in their warehouse
We wipe our stomachs clean with turnips
We lead the ox to the trough
Past the tavern.
We say "piss!" to the ox
"Piss!" the ox says to us.
We only get the soil
When we lie beneath it.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Brother, you make my eyes go wet
I see your life is no spree.
Here is an apple. See, I have three
So I can give one to you.
I don't see anything excessive in it:
We can both live.
But promise that you won't swallow
The pips in your greed
But, before I leave
Spit them into the earth.
And if an apple tree grows
In the middle of your field
Then come and pick the apples
From the tree you planted.
He offers him an apple, which he has polished with the sleeve of his coat.

FARMER

Man, that is the complaint!
How can I have a tree?
I could only have it in my dreams.
I have no land.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

But, here is land.

FARMER

Don't talk bullshit.
This land here belongs to the colonel.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

And where is he?

FARMER

Fled.

GOD OF HAPPINESS

So he is gone?
But now, you are here. Friend, not another word!
He hands him the apple and starts eating one himself.

FARMER

I think I understand you. Give me the apple.
Chooses.
Can I have this one?

GOD OF HAPPINESS

If it seems the right one to you.

FARMER *eating:*

Are you going west?

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Roughly.

FARMER

Travelling all night?

GOD OF HAPPINESS

Yes.

FARMER *looking up:*

Day is breaking.

Appendix 2
Photo-Booklet
Performing Hearts Project
Photos 2006-2008

Separate to this Document

Book 1.pdf

Book 2.pdf

Book 3.pdf

Appendix 3

DVD

This DVD contains:

A ***Prologue*** inspired by Heinrich von Kleist's "On the Marionette Theatre".

This prologue was performed at Government House Gardens in Perth.

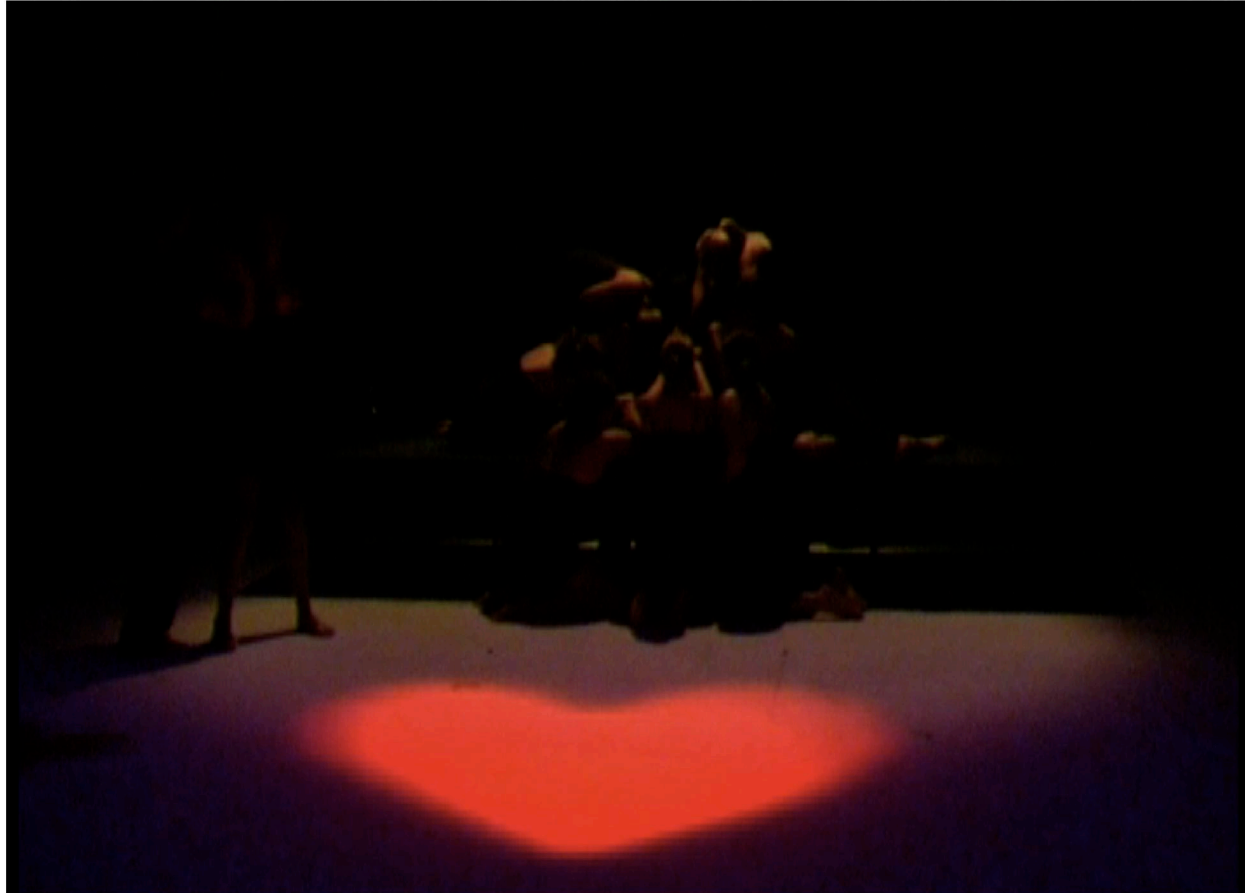
(see also Appendix 2: photo-booklet)

Journeys of the Happy Buddha based on Brecht's play fragment *Journeys of the God of Happiness*, which was normally performed on an open-air stage on the balcony of the Perth Concert Hall.

Important Information:

On the night of the filming, planned with the WAAPA Screen Academy, the stage could not be used, because a storm had brought down the backdrop. Also, because of the rain, the lights could not be used. Thanks to the spontaneous help of video artist Merit Fakler we got a video documentation of the indoor performance that we put up instantly in a corridor of the Perth Concert Hall (an hour before the performance started).

Because of the situation described above, the DVD does not show any of the video projections, no lighting or sound design and no special effects that were part of the show. (At the end of the *Execution Scene*, the video-image of the pumping heart has been edited into the recording, which gives at least an idea, how the original scene appeared on stage.) The simplicity of the performance that night has still its charm, but it is also disappointing, that this is the only recording. Please, get a better picture about the original show from the last section of the photo-booklet (Appendix 2).



Performing Hearts Project

Ralf Rauker PhD Performing Arts - Photos 2006-2008

Performing Hearts Project, Part 1

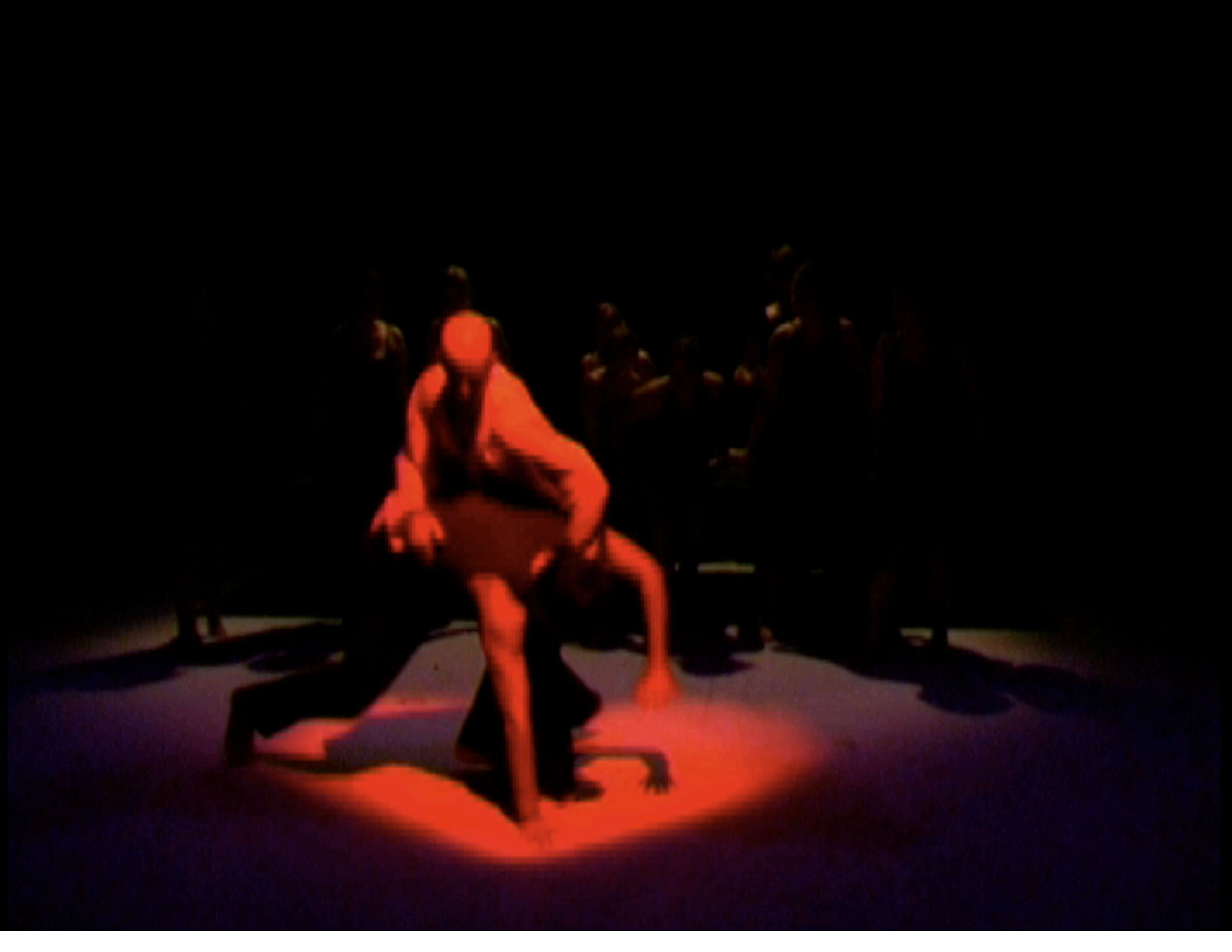
Brecht's "Baal" and the heart - 2006

The Performing Hearts production workshop took place in January/February 2006 at the Tricycle Theatre, Mount Lawley, Western Australia.

Participating actors were 2nd year Contemporary Performance students at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia.

Video stills: Merit Fakler

Video: Andrew Ewing

















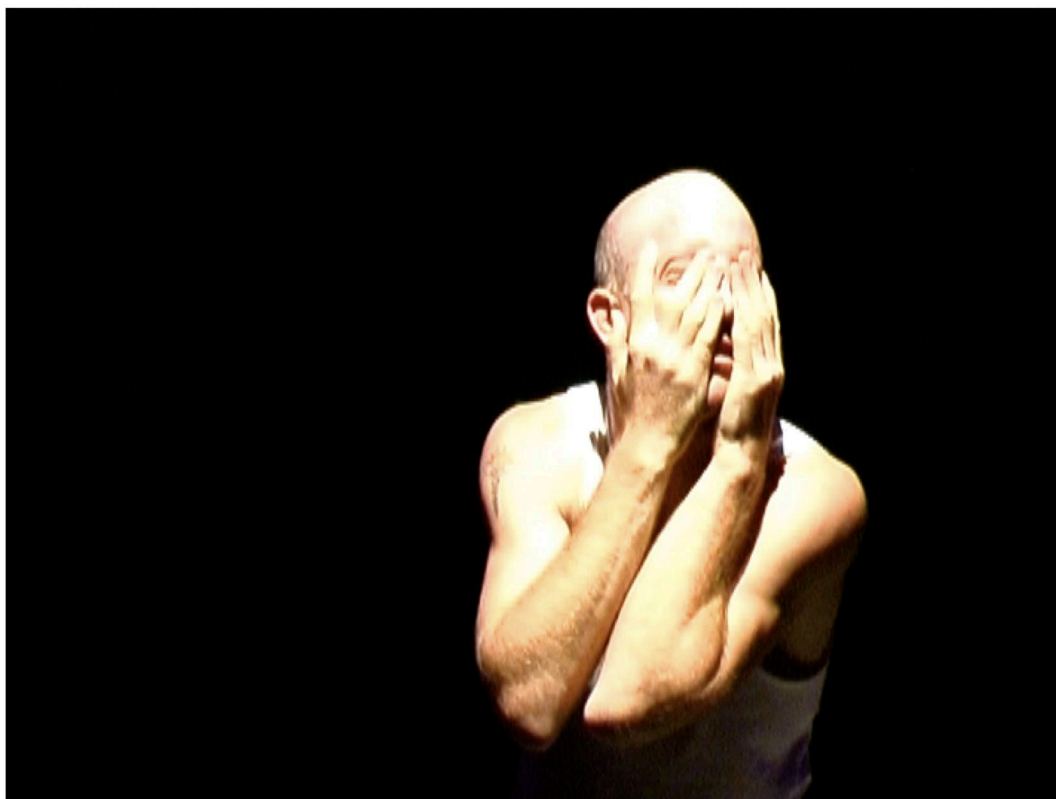
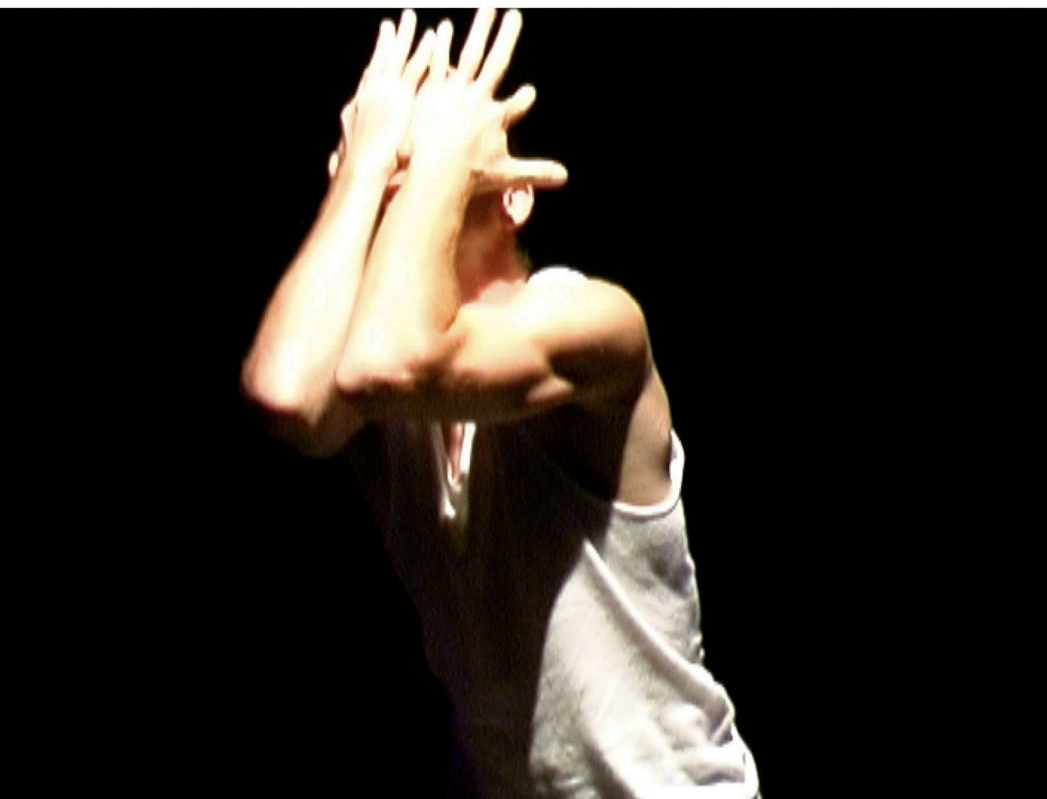


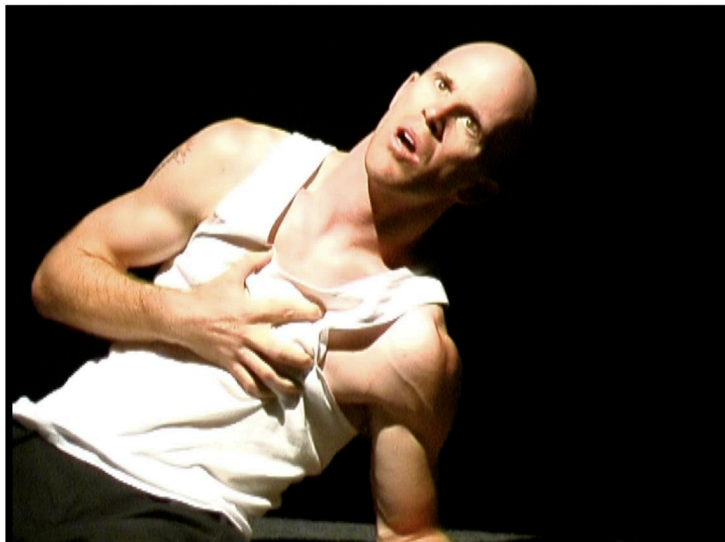
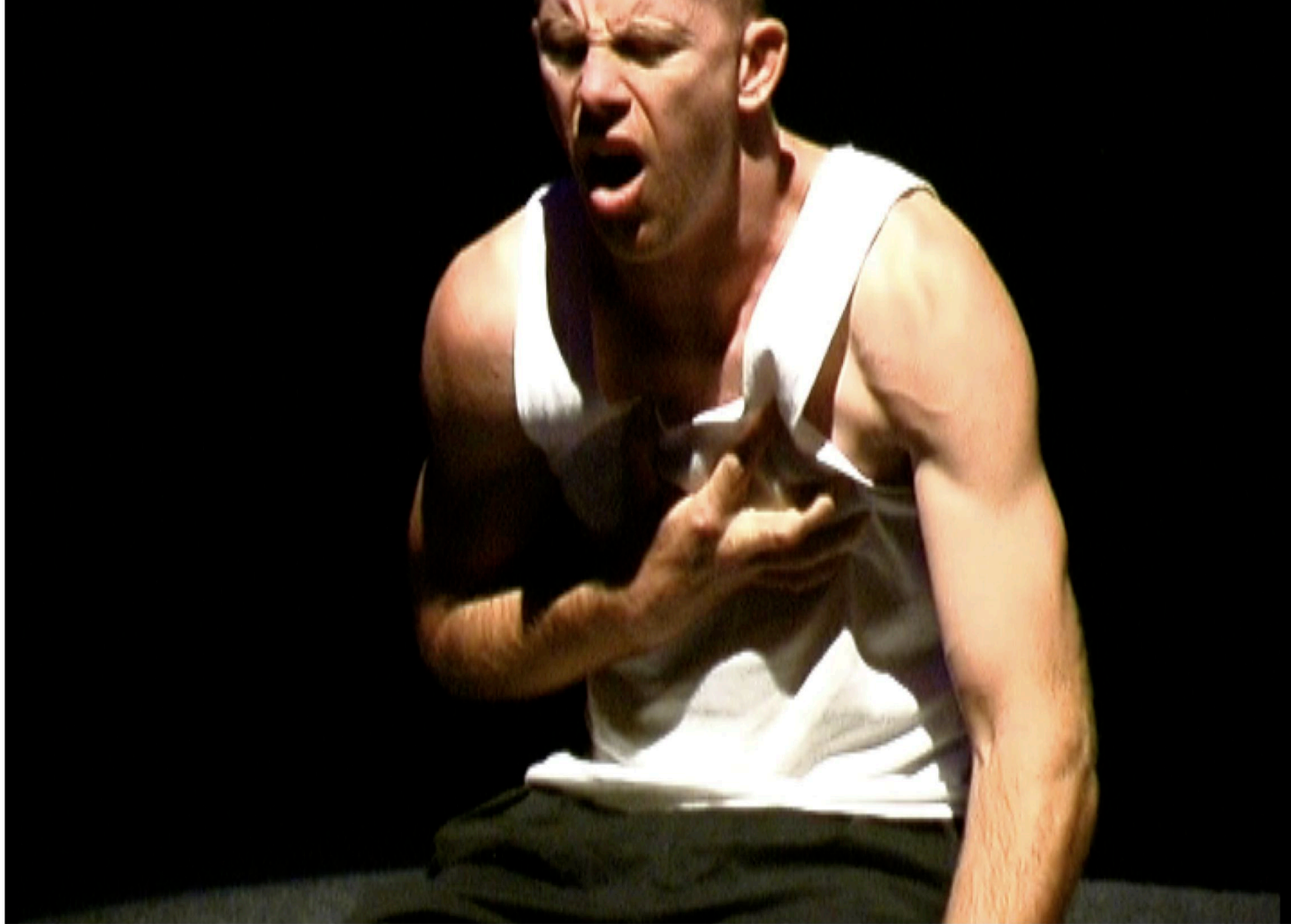










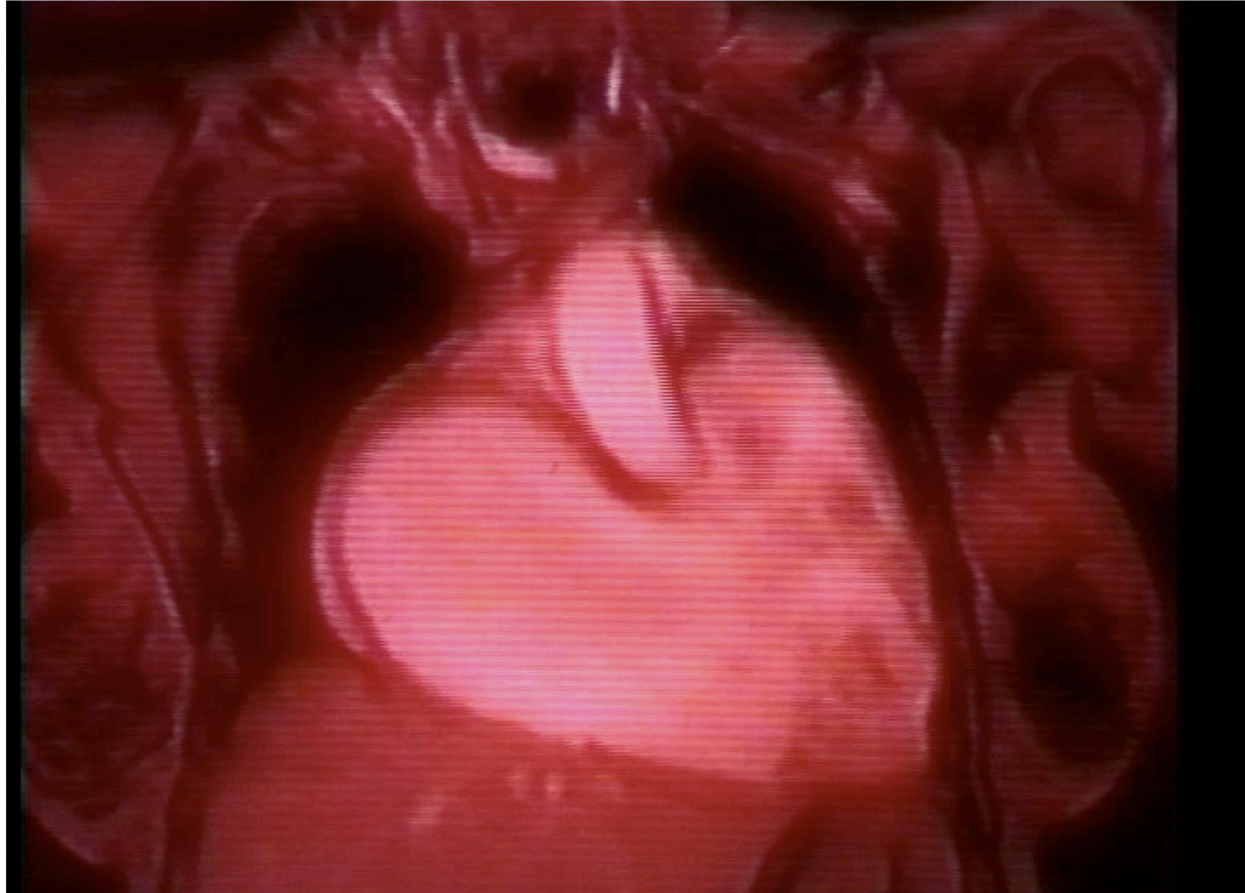












Performing Hearts Solo

Ralf Rauker - PhD Performing Arts

Performing Hearts Project, Part 2

Performing Hearts Solo 2007

Biennale of Electronic Arts, Perth

Brecht monument, Berliner Ensemble

"The Caller", Strasse des 17. Juni, Berlin

"The Caller", Perth Cultural Centre, Western Australia

Performing Hearts Solo, BEAP 2007, in collaboration with Merit Fakler

Video installation and Performance

photos: Merit Fakler





Brecht monument in front of the Berliner Ensemble



video stills - Performing Hearts Solo, BEAP 2007 - film material for video installation



"The Caller", Perth Cultural Centre, Western Australia



"The Caller", Strasse des 17. Juni, Berlin

Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981

Der Rufer (The Caller) 1967

Cast in bronze by Giessereie Barth, Berlin, 1981

Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Presented by CSR Limited 1982.

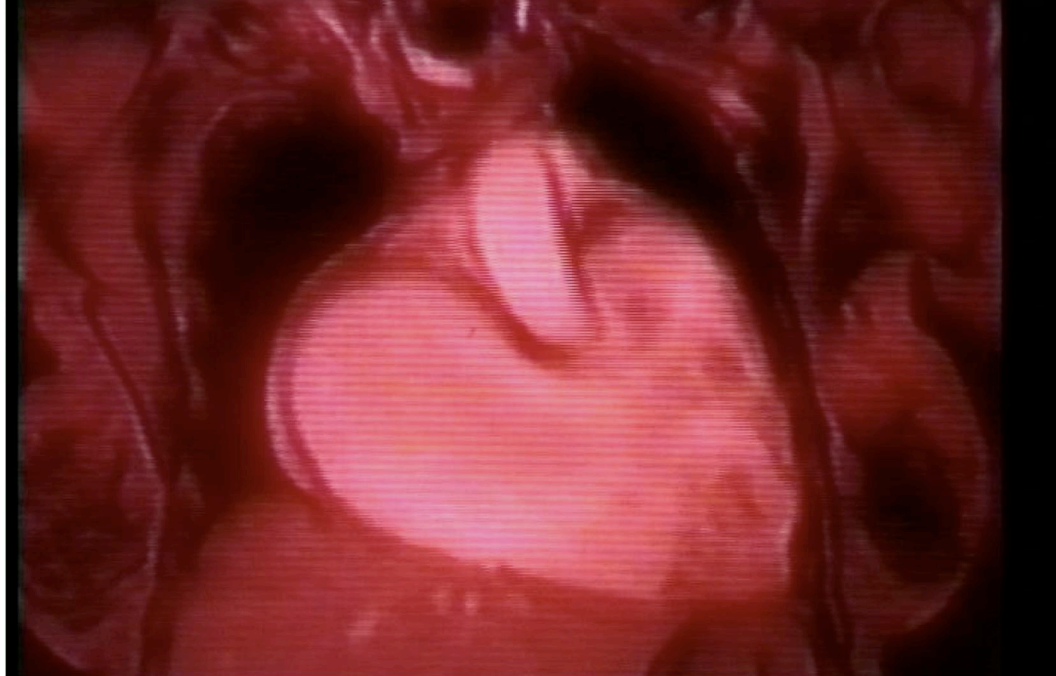
Dedicated to all Torture Victims and Survivors
on the 1st United Nations International Day
in support of Torture Victims 26th June 1998.



Bottom left: "The Caller", Berlin, Brandenburg Gate in background; other photos, Perth Cultural Centre



Brecht monument; 'The Caller'; Christopher Street Day Parade, Berlin 2006; Brecht monument;



Brecht monument; The human heart; "The Caller"; World Cup celebrations, Berlin 2006



















Berlin

Sculpture (Der Rufer)
Historical data

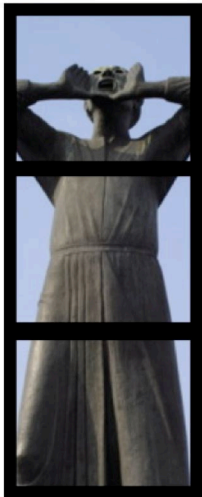
Surround data: weather,
daytime, traffic, tourist...



Projection :
live webcam,
edited video

**Video/digital
installation**

Information / titels



Perth

Actor, life body

Life data:
Heartbeat, blood pressure,
Breathing...



Data captured:
Movement
Heartbeat (sound)
Breathing (sound)
Perspiration
Language (Poem)
Emotional changes

Transformation of/by data: in light, sound, structure...

Wheel change (B.Brecht)

I am sitting beside the road
The driver changes the wheel
I don't like where I come from
I don't like where I'm going to
Why am I looking to the wheel change
With impatience?

Berlin

Sculpture (Bertolt Brecht)
Historical data

Surround data: weather,
daytime, people, birds...



Still, Sculpture
Brecht Texts and poems

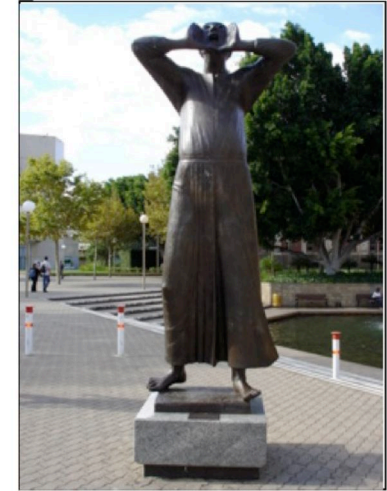
Biographical data:
heart neurosis

Information / titels

Perth

Sculpture (The caller)
Historical data

Surround data: weather,
daytime, traffic, tourist...



Projection:
live webcam,
edited video

**Video/digital
installation**

Information / titels





ARTISTS:

Ralf Rauker (Perth) – concept & performance

Merit Fakler (Berlin) – video artist

Stillness in theatre seems to be the biggest risk an artist can take. While 'a still', 'a still life' and a traditional sculpture give the spectator a possibility for contemplation, an actor in stillness can be perceived as something irritating, maybe frightening.

A body on stage kept in stillness for a long time provokes the spectator's speculation whether it's dead or alive, whether it's a puppet, a sculpture or a human. This moment of irritation is the starting point for the performance research, which confronts the traditional sculpture representing a

human body in stillness and the actual living body of the performer presenting sculptural stillness. Here the heartbeat will be of particular interest.

The Caller, a sculpture by German artist Gerhard Marcks (1889–1981), located in front of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, will be the physical focus point during the performance. The same sculpture is facing the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, the city where the performer had been living for 21 years – a transcontinental connection made visible in the performance.

Ralf Rauker in collaboration with Merit Fakler presents . . . **Performing Hearts Solo**

VENUE: A bench outside the entrance to The Art Gallery of Western Australia,
Perth Cultural Centre

DATES: 11 – 21 September, daily from 4-5pm

As a traveller between Perth and Berlin since 2002, Ralf Rauker has been collecting, communicating and memorizing cultural, political and autobiographical data in different medias. Within an audio-visual installation using the living, 'real' body, the *Performing Hearts Solo* will expose this journey as a search for stillness.

Ralf Rauker studied acting in Berlin, worked as an actor/director in Europe and, since 2003, has been employed as a contemporary performance lecturer at Edith Cowan University, Perth. Merit Fakler studied set design and video in Berlin. Using her expertise in both areas she works as an artist in Germany and abroad.

Performing Hearts Solo is dedicated to Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), German political playwright and poet.

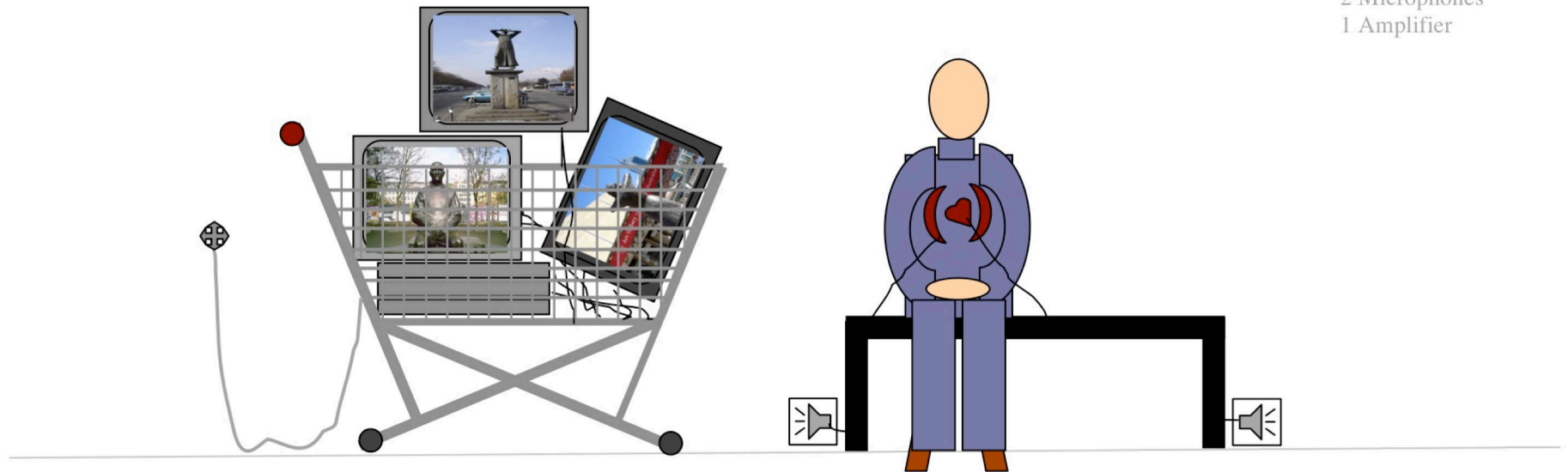
While *Performing Hearts Solo* is not a presentation of The Art Gallery of Western Australia, Ralf Rauker greatly appreciates the assistance provided by the Gallery in facilitating his performance.

- ▶ SHOWCASE
- ▶ SATELLITE
- ▶ CONFERENCE
- ▶ CLUB
- ▶ CALENDAR
- ▶ OTHER

PERFORMING HEARTS SOLO by Ralf Rauker
 in collaboration with Merit Fakler
 BEAP 2007 – STILLNESS

Sketch by Merit Fakler

- 1 Bench
- 1 Sign with poem
- 1 Shopping trolley
- 3 TV Monitor
- 3 DVD Player
- 3 Connecting cable
- 6 Power Plug in
- 2 Speaker
- 2 Microphones
- 1 Amplifier



THE CALLER - BERLIN

Moving Images – stills –
 people – weather – traffic...

THE CALLER - PERTH

Moving Images – stills –
 people – weather – sky...

BRECHT SCULPTURE - BERLIN

Texts – Brecht – Poem
 Moved Images – Stills – Breakdowns

WHEEL CHANGE
 I am sitting beside the road
 The driver changes the wheel
 I don't like where I come from
 I don't like where I am going to
 Why am I looking to the wheel change
 With impatience?



Journeys of the Happy Buddha

Performing Hearts Project

Performing Hearts Project, Part 3

Journeys of the Happy Buddha

Performance Component, PhD Perf. Arts

The making of a Happy Buddha sculpture
Rehearsal and Performance

photos: Merit Fakler





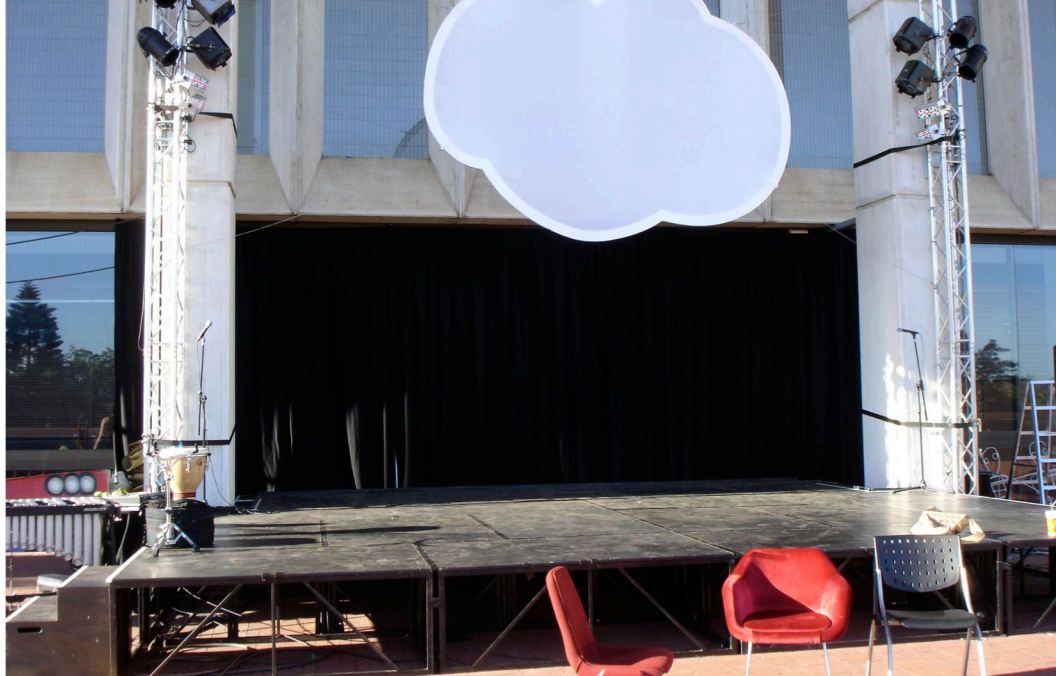




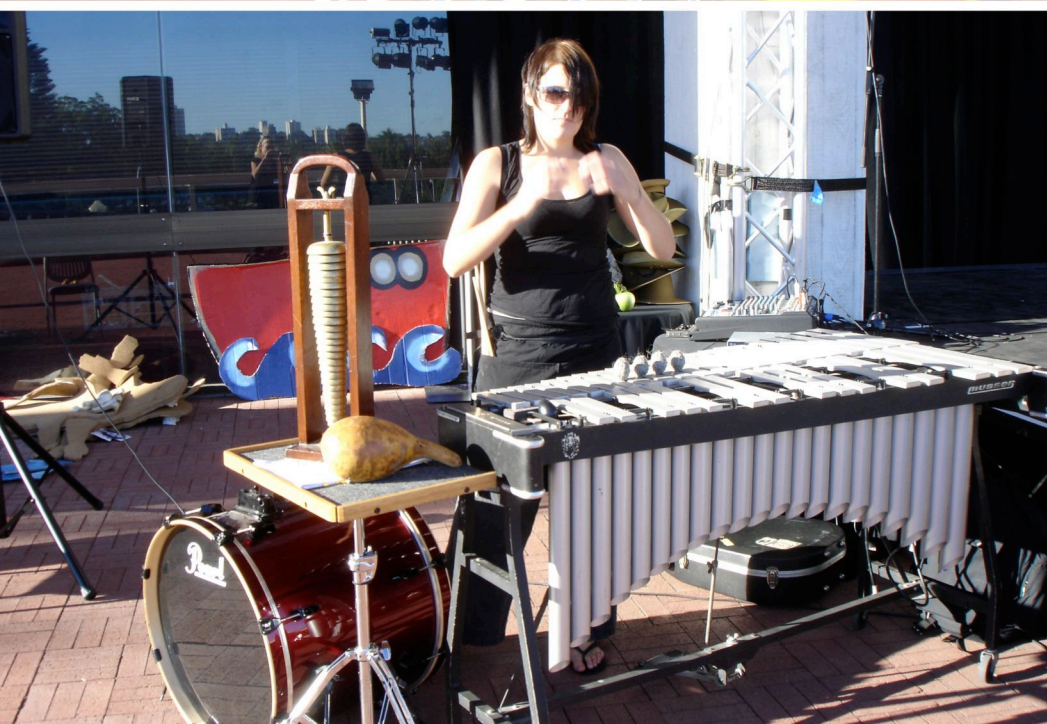
Rehearsals, Mount Lawley Campus, ECU



Arrival at the performance venue, Perth Concert Hall



Preparing the venue and rehearsals



View of the city and Government house Gardens



Angel and satyr



Angel; Mr. C; Happy Buddha waiting; rehearsal feedback



The prologue - Rehearsals at Government House Gardens



The prologue was inspired by Heinrich von Kleist's essay: On the Marionette Theatre



The loss of innocence - a biblical intermezzo



Paradise exit this way - Adam's and Eve's curse

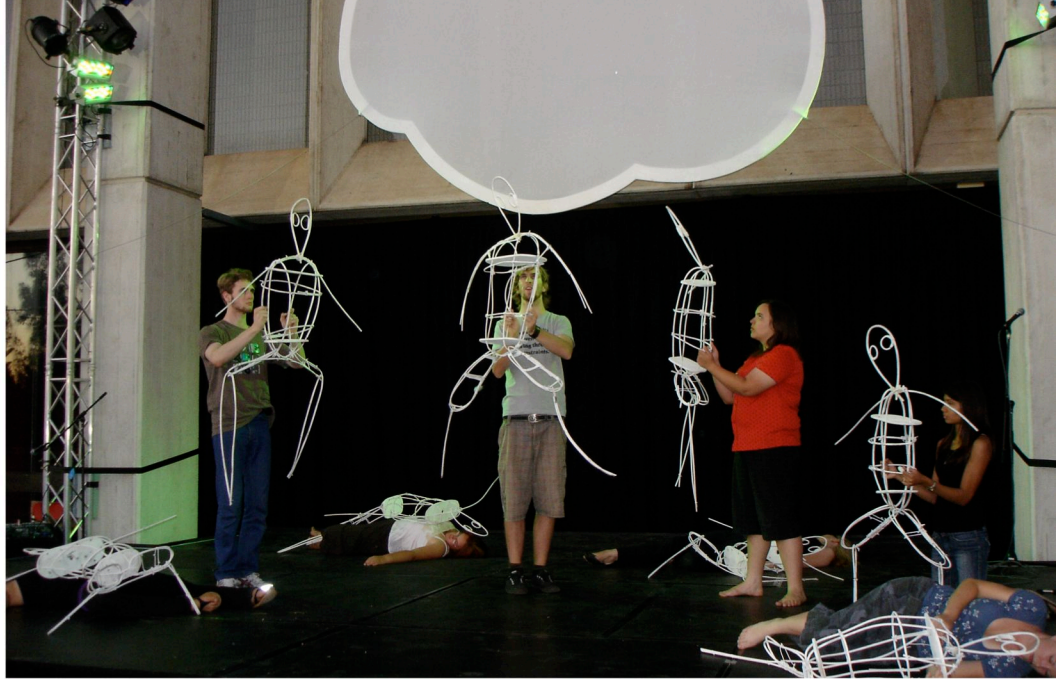
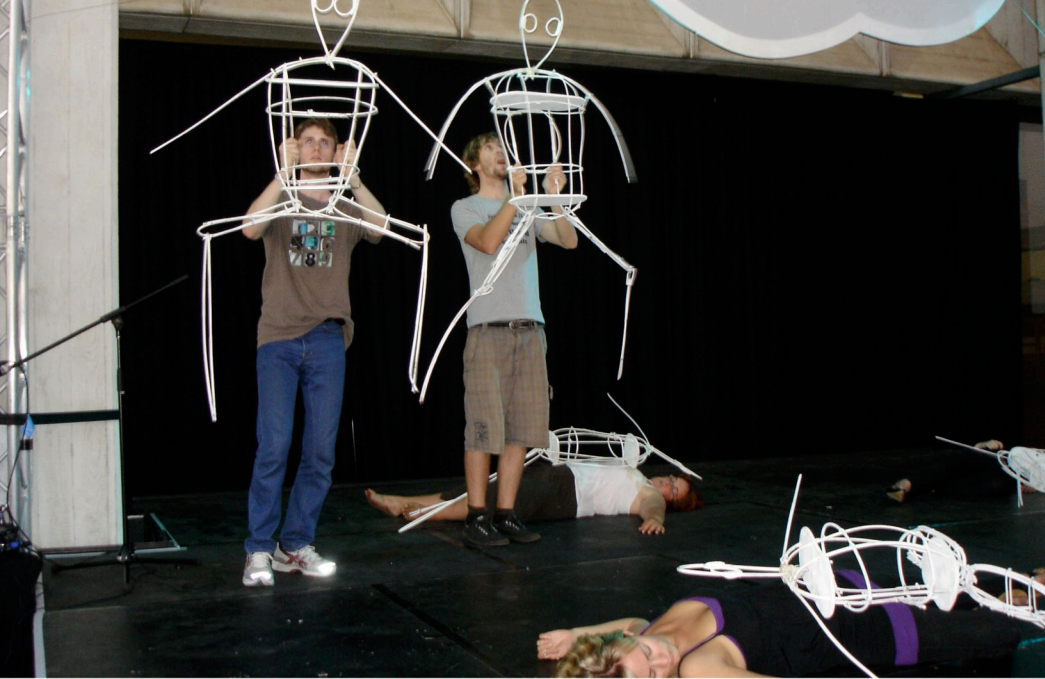


Arrival in a new world - performance prologue at Government House Gardens - rehearsal photos

Journeys of the Happy Buddha -UNIMA 2008

Inspired by Bertolt Brecht's opera fragment Journeys of the God of Happiness

Rehearsal photos on the following 5 pages



The Happy Buddha arrives from the East after the country has been destroyed by war



Happy Buddha travels West - The Statue of Liberty and Mr. President welcome him



Followers of the Happy Buddha play cards, fight for gold, get drunk... but one searches for a Golden Heart.



The followers of the Happy Buddha praise him with a song.



The Happy Buddha can't be executed - but his golden body melted and his heart became an industrial pump

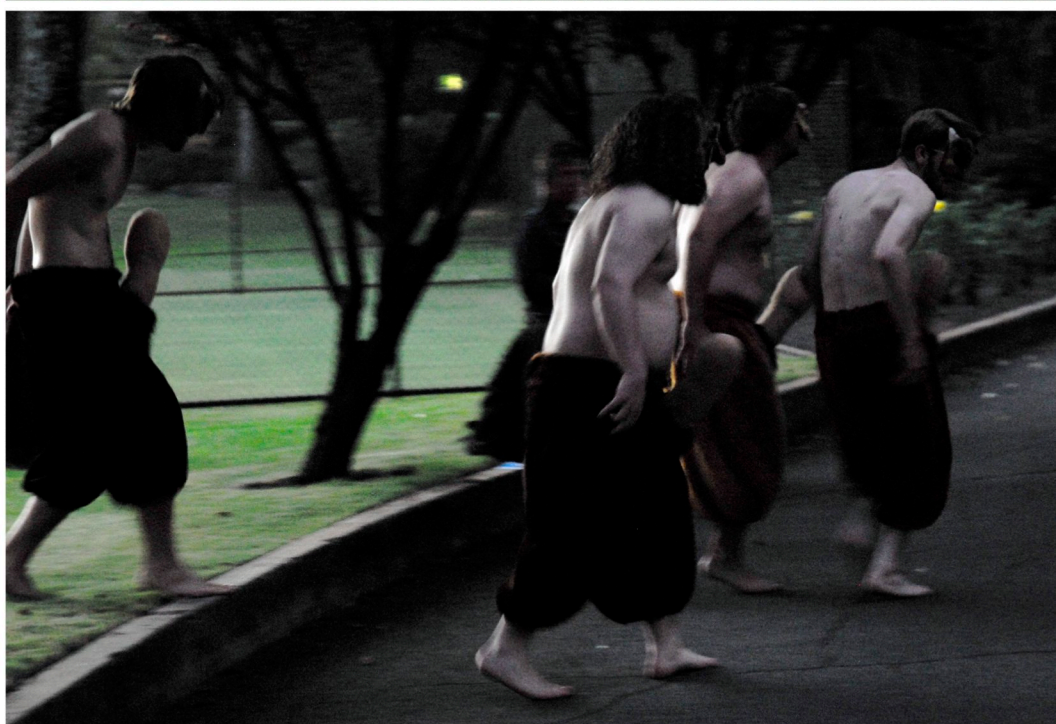


Journeys of The Happy Buddha

Performance Photos

Journeys of The Happy Buddha World Puppetry Festival, Perth 2008

Photos: Ashley De Prazer



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens



Prologue, Government House Gardens

End of Prologue

Audience invited to follow the performers to
the Perth Concert Hall balcony

Photos: Ashley De Prazer



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of The Happy Buddha, Perth Concert Hall



Journeys of the Happy Buddha

2nd - 5th April

Performing Hearts Project in
collaboration with Edith Cowan
University & Spare Parts Puppet
Theatre

World Puppetry Festival 2008

Commencing in the secluded gardens of Government House with a prologue derived from Heinrich von Kleist's famous essay *On the Marionette Theatre*, spectators are invited to make their own 'journey around the world' to explore the most burning questions of our time.

Follow the Happy Buddha to the verandah of the Perth Concert Hall in this promenade production.

Directed by Ralf Rauker and presented by contemporary performance students, School of Communications and Arts and the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

2nd - 5th April 2008

Wed 2: 6:30pm

Thu 3: 6:30pm

Fri 4: 6:30pm

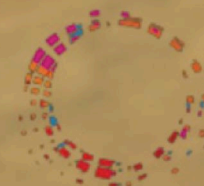
Sat 5: 6:30pm

Government House Gardens
& Perth Concert Hall - Verandah
St Georges Terrace

Entry: Full \$16

Bookings: bofsticketing.com.au

BOCS (08) 94841133

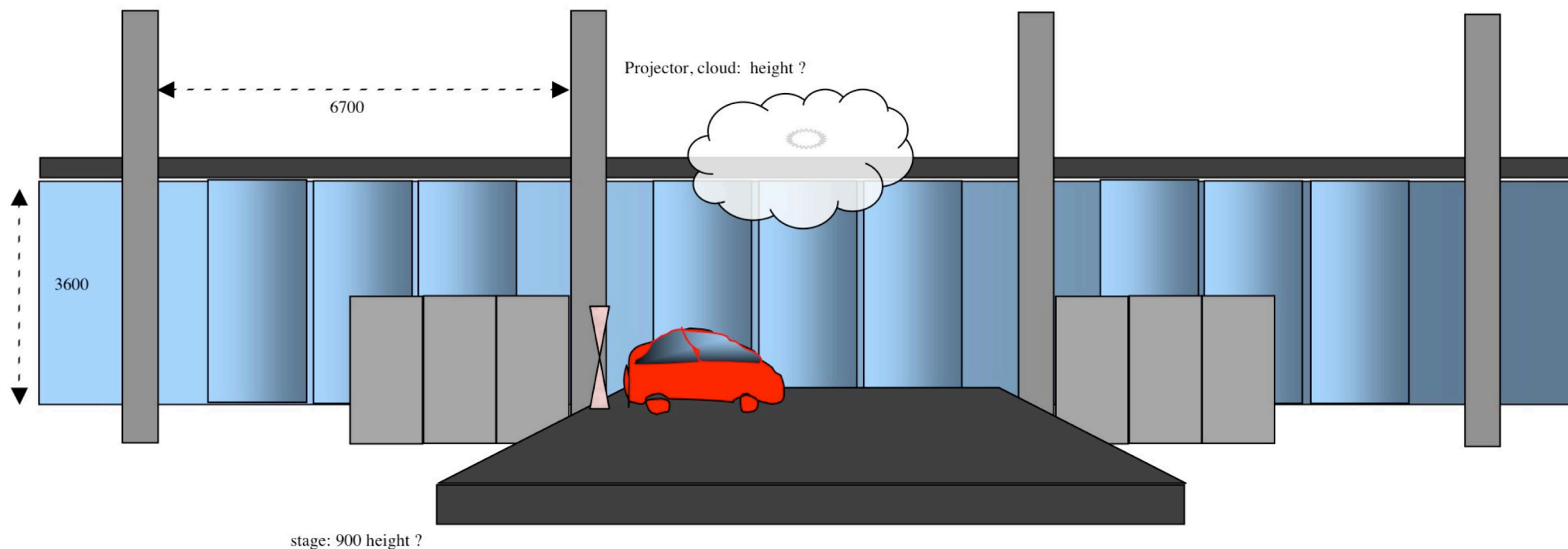


waapa
Western Australian
Academy of Performing Arts

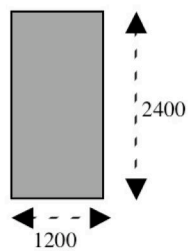


Please note: This performance contains puppet nudity and violence

School of Communications and Arts



6 Flats:



Actor: 1700 height



pillars:
620x920



car: 2500x1500



Happy Buddha Project 2008
Perth Concert Hall Veranda

Stage-Sketch by Merit Fakler





